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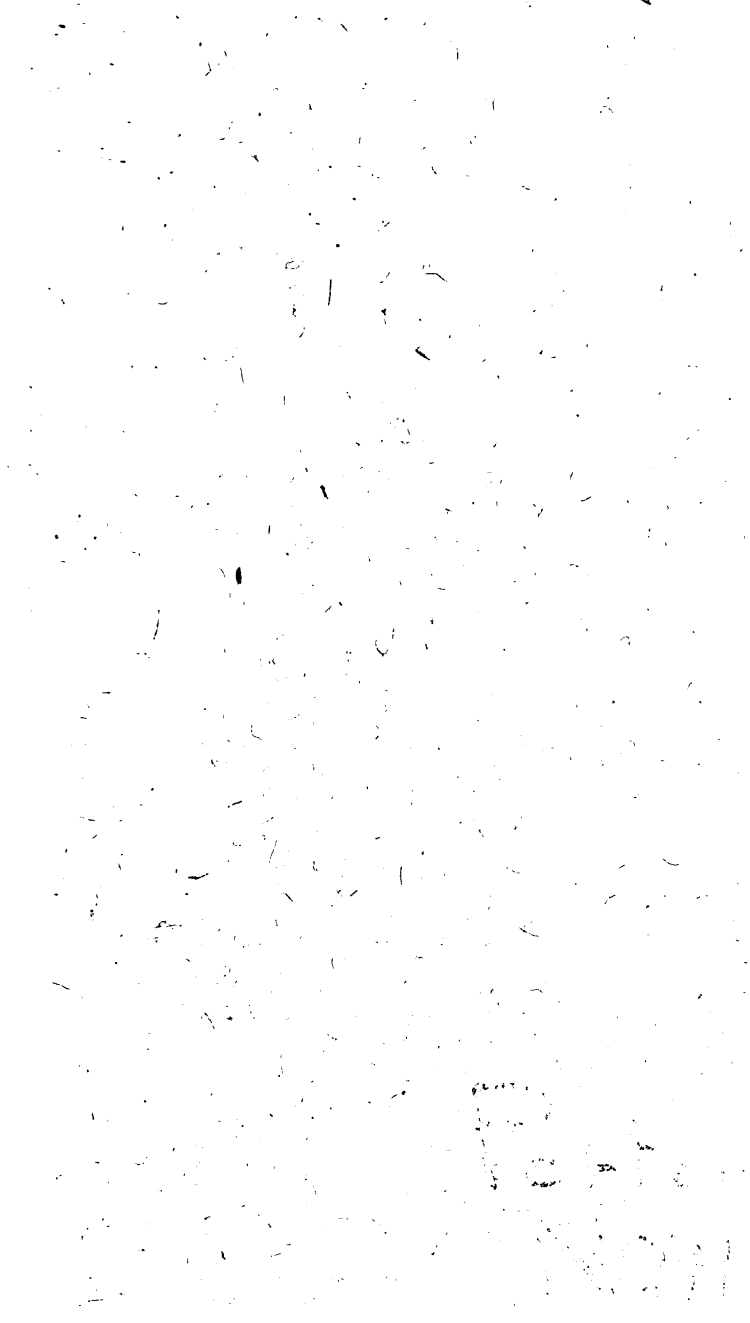
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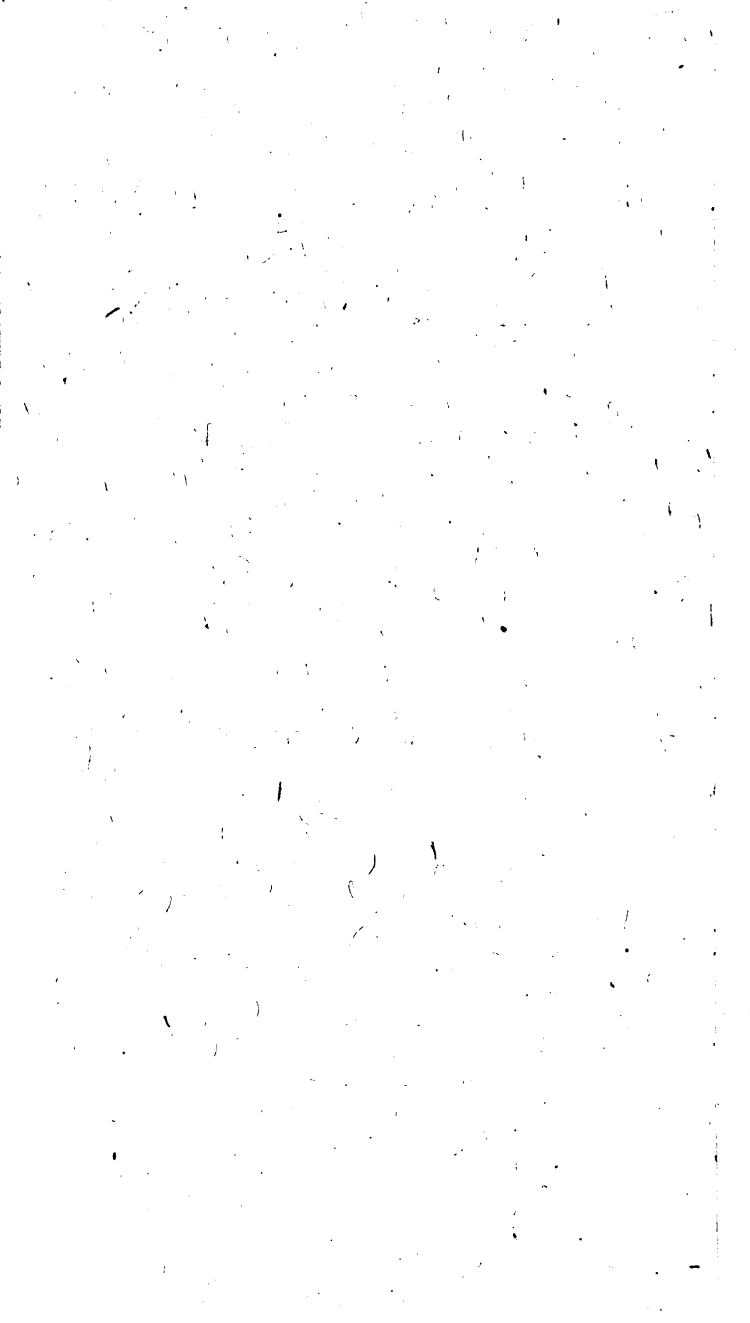
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HONOR O'HARA.

A Nobel,

IN TWO VOLUMES.

BY ANNA MARIA PORTER,

AUTHOR OF "THE HUNGARIAN BROTHERS," "THE RECLUSE
OF NORWAY," &c. &c. &c.

"O when shall I regain my orbit of peace and glory!"

Erskine's Internal Evidence, &c.

VOL. I.

NEW-YORK:

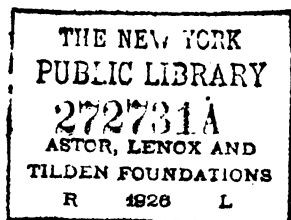
PRINTED BY J. & J. HARPER,
FOR E. DUYCKINCK, COLLINS AND HANNAY, COLLINS
AND CO., E. BLISS AND E. WHITE, G. AND C. CARVILL,
O. A. ROORBACH, AND W. B. GILLEY.

1827.

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PREFATORY NOTICE.

ERE the Reader proceed to the perusal of the following volumes, he is requested to prepare himself for a perceptible difference in their character: a difference observable, perhaps, as much in the strain of their thought, as in the style by which it is expressed.

Will it be a sufficient apology to say, that rather more than the first volume was written directly after the whole story was planned, three years ago;—that it was laid aside, in consequence of temporary loss of sight, and not resumed until last winter, before the end of which, it was entirely completed?

So long an interval could not fail of producing such changes in the mind and feelings of the Writer, as might be expected to ensue from witnessing, or experiencing, certain changes in the current of her own, or of other dear persons' lives. Thus, she is aware, that the careless tone of her commencement, is altered to a much graver one in many succeeding parts; and that she has suffered one or two characters to slip from her hands with very little colouring, merely because she found her own spirits less calculated to finish them highly, than when they were first sketched. The Writer confesses that her inclination points to what is serious, perhaps saddening, in composition; but friends had so repeatedly urged her to try a lighter style, that she was induced to make the attempt.

Doubtful of her qualification to embody the fashionable manners of the day we are now living in, or to give the amusing idioms of its peculiar dialect with elegance and fidelity, she has deemed it prudent to throw her story

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back to a period of which few of her readers are likely to retain such vivid recollections, as would render inaccuracy of dates, or of fleeting modes, a matter of moment. She is not, however, conscious of having erred in the period allotted to any public event; having always resorted to the Annual Register for certain information. Such as it is, this Novel is now submitted to the public, with the assurance, that if, in attempting to portray ordinary life with a livelier pen than she had employed in tracing the humble history of Jeannie Halliday, the Writer shall be found to have failed in interesting or amusing, she will then lay it aside altogether, and resume that of romantic fiction.

ESHER, *August*, 1826.

HONOR O'HARA.

CHAPTER I.

AT the upper end of a straggling village, hanging on a steep hill's side, in the North of England, stood an old tumble-down rectory : its walls had once been whitewashed ; but, like a dirty fair face, only looked more unseemly, from sundry patches of lime staring here and there, through gaps in its crust of weather-stains.

In times past, a waving mixture of ivies and jessamines, had increased the picturesqueness of its gable-ends, and clustering chimneys ; but these vegetable hangings having a trick of harbouring birds and insects, a certain ruler in the mansion, tore away, with a strong hand, the ivy and jessamine of twenty years' growth. So now, the sole remaining testimonial of former ornament, was but the root of the ivy ; which being of great thickness, and sawed to the ground, served as an occasional standing place for a broken-spouted watering-pot ; which oftener lay covered with dirt, as well as bruises, (a most unsightly spectacle,) just under the parlour window.

Close by this degraded spot, a worm-eaten gate swinging on one hinge, and kept fast by a bit of rope passed through a hole and slung over a nail, opened into a forlorn space, once known by the name of *the garden*, now jointly occupied by pigs and potatoes. The stumps of two or three decayed apple-trees, and the stem of one living wine-sour plum, appeared above the potato tops, and served for rubbing-posts to the hogs ; but, saving these wretched memorials of better days, not a shrub, not a flower remained, to mark

"Where a garden had been."

To the left of this delectable spot lay a little plashy Close, called the farmyard ; where a stable, a pig-sty, a dunghill, and heaps of puddly straw were all huddled together into so many floating islands, divided by different channels of wet and mire. A few draggie-tailed fowls,—“a toothless mastiff bitch,”—a lean Alderney cow,—a wall-eyed cart-horse, and thirteen pigs, (when they chose to transfer their fragrant persons from the garden to the sty,) made up the complement of living furniture in the farmyard.

The house had nobler inhabitants. These consisted of Mr. Meredith the incumbent, his wife, his niece, a great gaunt woman of all-work, an Irish nurse, and a lank-haired footboy, not undeserving the very coarsest name for seedlings of his class. Mrs. Meredith (who would venture to deny her precedence?) was in truth a most formidable personage ; being a lady without either temper, sense, or breeding. For eighteen years it had been her laudable practice to pass through the whole of her house twenty times every day, carrying all before her like a whirlwind : scaring men, women, children, dogs, and cats, into the first hole they could find shelter in. Doubtless she did it on the principle of purifying the moral atmosphere of the Rectory.

Be that as it may, banging of doors, rattling up and pulling down of windows, clattering of sundry culinary vessels, squalls of luckless household animals, squabbles with itinerant venders or menders of useful commodities ; bawling, calling, scolding, slapping—such was the full chorus of domestic discords which had regularly followed Mrs. Meredith's issue from the nuptial couch, every morning during seventeen years, eleven months, and two weeks. Mr. Meredith's honey-moon having had but half a face.

Through the whole of the ordinary day, this hurricane blew with the constancy of a trade-wind, during which time Mrs. Meredith went slopping about in a dingy gown and flap-eared cap ; but on the signal of a visiter, or by the evening, the fierce drab changed into a smart woman, all smiles and servility ; seated at the

card-table of a *bettermost* neighbour, or presiding over her own tea and toast, surrounded by misses in muslins, matrons in discoloured silks, and spinsters in scoured satins. Mrs. Meredith had indeed so becoming a company face to put on with her company gown, that had it not been for eaves-droppers and servants, she would have passed current, (at least among new acquaintance,) for a good-humoured, uneducated woman; but with the last visiter, her last smile duly disappeared, and she was rude Boreas again. So relentless in truth, was the scythe, or flail of her insufferable temper, that it mowed down and scattered all before it, and seemed in a fair way, therefore, of leaving her nothing to scold at last. However, against this direful calamity she was fortunately provided with a victim for life—that victim was her husband. He, poor gentleman, had a sorrowful trick of sighing at intervals; and a sigh from him was ever the precursor of a storm from her. At that unlucky signal Mrs. Meredith was ready with her fiercest bolt. This was sure to fall in the shape of biting reproaches for his indifference to her value as a chaste wife, and skilful manager—of certain *castings-up* of former obligations from her kindred; and of her own especial grace, in accepting the forsaken swain of the scornful Bell Foster,—of violent invectives against that proud beauty, and broad hints that she had not taken herself off with the captain of dragoons, until it was high time.

The meek-spirited Mr. Meredith could sit quietly under the storm whilst it only buffeted himself; but whenever it beat upon the fair living form, or too probably the ashes of that misguided young creature to whom his heart had once been devoted, he was no longer master of himself, and a brimming eye and quivering lip ever accompanied the hasty action with which he started from his chair, and quitted the apartment.

Mr. Meredith would have honoured a better fate; for he had a tender heart, a yielding temper, tolerable talents, and much better principles. He passed among his servants and immediate neighbours for a very learned

man ; because having no attraction to his parlour, he lived principally in his study. There, he rather dozed over books of research, in melancholy indolence, than buckled to their pith and argument with any vigour of intellect akin to their own. His first affections having been disappointed, and the narrow circle he then moved in, as curate merely of Edenfell, furnishing no other creature fitted to cope with the image of the really charming girl he worshipped two or three years in respectful silence, Mr. Meredith went on from twenty-five till thirty-seven without feeling a new attachment, or dreaming of matrimony.

Unluckily the widow of an unsuccessful ship-owner lived near the parsonage, and she had one black-eyed daughter, with a smart person, and a profusion of smarter pertnesses, to say when she chose to *make the agreeable*, a part she always chose to play before the young rector. The mother's hearty presents were soon as liberally bestowed, nay kindly thrust upon Mr. Meredith, as the daughter's flippant attentions. An uncle of Miss Simpson's, a plain shrewd yeoman, always maintained that marriage was the duty of every man ; and her aunt, a withered spinster, dolefully deprecated for her dear Emmy, the sad fate of a poor lone woman like herself.

Mr. Meredith was troubled by the assertions and arguments of the uncle ; he was distressed at the aunt's piteous representations ; he was besides a good-natured, self-slighting man, and he believed himself greatly bound to this family, inferior as they were. The uncle had always been at hand to assist him in the sore season of tythe-gathering ; the maiden aunt was ever ready to descend from her little aëry at the grocer's, for the charitable purpose of saving their reverend friend the waste of half a yard in a web of cloth ; her careful shears set all pilfering or rash handed maidens at defiance. Mrs. Simpson, the really worthy mother, had always a cold goose pye, or a large plain cake at the service of the rectory, when its larder was taken by surprise ; she knew what good Mr. Meredith liked at table, so she could exactly suit his taste, in all her little Christmas

and Midsummer offerings. Her daughter put the last touches to these obligations, by looking down on the ground, when her uncle exhorted his Christian teacher to marry ; looking up to Heaven, as her aunt bemoaned her singlehood ; stitching the wristbands of the shirts so thriftily cut out ; and notably honouring her mother's assurance, that all the given dainties were done under Emmy's eye, by ever showing herself "cumbered with much serving."

Thus beleaguered by a whole family, without a single diversion being made in his favour by any of the surrounding gentry, (for he had shunned them, during his ill-starred affection for Bell Foster,) Mr. Meredith might not, after all, perhaps have fallen to the enemy, had it not been for an unforeseen stroke, which carried him at once. Mrs. Simpson was seized with paralysis: when she recovered the use of speech, aware that she must die, she intreated her good friend's prayers by her bedside. After devoutly joining in those prayers, she took the opportunity of unburthening her mind to him upon every subject. With real simpleness and genuine anxiety for an only child's welfare, she reminded the good bachelor of her many neighbourly offices to him, adding, that she hoped thoughts of these would make him kind to her poor girl, after she was gone. She ventured to add, that if ever he turned his mind to a wife, she hoped he would think of Emmy, who, barring a little quickness of temper, would make the most discreet, managing, pains-taking wife in the country, and would be just the woman for him, who was always letting himself be imposed upon.

Mr. Meredith had not a word to defend himself with : a fearful array of really kind offices were marshalled against him. Completely discomfited, he suffered Mrs. Simpson to triumph. The artless, fervent, "God be praised ! O God bless you, dear sir," of the poor mother, went to Meredith's heart ; and assuring her he would try to make her daughter happy, he squeezed the shaking hand, then grasping his with more familiar kindness, and calling in the sobbing Miss Emmy, re-

peated the assurance to her, and received her joyful vows of affection and duty in return.

Mrs. Simpson died—Mr. Meredith married. Emulous to deserve the character given her by her mother, the bride began betimes to exercise her talent :

“ For her mind
Shaped goodliest rules of discipline,”

such as Mr. Southey tells us, led the heroine of one of his Botany Bay eclogues

“ Only to whip two preätices to death.”

Emulous also of praise, she harangued so fluently, and frequently, upon the duties and difficulties of a good manager, that our ignorant divine felt persuaded, a housewife was synonymous with a scold ; that nothing valuable in this sublunary sphere was to be got at, except he consented to snatch it out of briars and thorns. Thus, if his wife's tongue kept servants on the alert, awed tradesmen into moderate charges, and so restrained his annual expenditure between the banks of a narrow income, he had no right to complain.

By degrees, however, Mr. Meredith discovered that his wife's oratory was all “ noise and fury, signifying nothing :” that his stomach was not indemnified for the stunning of his ears : that he could not balance a good table against a bad companion ; nor a clean house against an illiterate wife ; that his habitation was absolutely dirtier, and more disorderly than any man's in the parish ; that he had always the worst trades-people, the worst provisions, and the worst servants possible ; that his bills were large, his comforts small ; and, that while his Better half was dragooning servants and labourers into performing impossibilities, the right, and the useful, and the practicable were neglected.

Thus his garden-gate had remained without other fastening, than the bit of rope mentioned heretofore, merely because Mrs. Meredith haggled every day with the blacksmith, about sixpence in the agreement for

putting on a hasp ; and the garden itself was stripped of fruits and flowers, and laid down in potatoes, because it had once been plundered by a set of unlucky boys.

Poor Mr. Meredith saw his little comforts and few pleasures laid waste, one by one ; he loved a garden, though he rarely worked in it ; and he beheld the ruin of his, with a sorrowful eye. But Mr. Meredith, like many married men, preferred peace to a garden. Once, indeed, he ventured to lament this privation : "Why, my dear," retorted his wife, smartly, "you told us, in your sermon, the other day, that the whole world is a garden—go and walk out into the fields, and take your pleasure now."

This was said with the flippant air of former times ; and in those days our unsuspecting divine would have fancied it merely cheerful raillery : unhappily, he was now better informed ; but he had passed under the yoke.

Mr. Meredith still gave his wife credit for the best intentions, and the greatest activity in household government—for was she ever at rest ? was she not always on her foot, up stairs and down stairs, breaking in upon his sermon-writing or his reveries, with eternal complaints of servants, and demands for interference with trades-people, with whom, by the way, she never suffered him to interfere ? Surely, so much anxiety to make up by savingness the deficiency of her own fortune, was a proof of gratitude and principle, with which he ought to be pleased ? and by this measure her husband judged her. Unobserving man ! he never inquired how she came by the variety of bonnets, caps, and gowns, which were proudly paraded before her lesser neighbours at church, and in tea-parties. For this display, Mrs. Meredith, in fact, bartered every thing ; here was the aim and end of her management. She contrived to pay the largest milliner's and mantua-maker's bills incurred in the village, without presenting them to her husband. How she did it, I leave such ladies to answer who can hash up a family dinner, and

a smart head-gear, out of the same shallow purse at the same instant.

Perhaps this insatiable thirst for possessing fine clothes, may account for some of the dilapidations of Mr. Meredith's habitation. There was in truth only one apartment in the rectory which could boast of neatness and comfort: and that was the little south room in one of the gables, inhabited by Honor O'Hara. There that young lady had contrived to amass a few books, and a few scarce plants; to cover the faded gray paper with prints framed on it by broad and narrow lines of Indian ink, neatly drawn round them by her own hand; to keep the dimity curtains of her tent-bed, and her single large window always white; and seated at a table spread with work, books, and sketches, escape from the noise and disorder of the rooms below.

Upon this little stronghold Mrs. Meredith for some time made the most desperate assaults; determined to dislodge its youthful inhabitant from what she misnamed "her fine lady's idling place." But Honoria defended herself with so much spirit, resolution, and good humour, that the assailant was always beaten back with loss.

Finding neither sap nor storm of any avail, the virago at length abandoned the attempt.

She did well; for who may hope to conquer a person whose temper is as invincible as their resolution? Miss O'Hara was never to be plagued or scolded into ill-humour; and she attached herself so strongly to every thing animate or inanimate, which pleased her at all, that something more powerful than a raving tongue was necessary to make her resign her property in the large casemented window, whence she had habitually looked now for two years, at trees and hills, associated with some pensive or agreeable train of ideas.

The view seen from this favourite window was, in reality, charming of itself: it consisted of a range of romantic hills, backed by the lofty Cheviots; discovering in their recesses, little glens, where wreaths of

smoke and cheerful sounds rising above the tufted trees, told of cottages and contented labour.

At the foot of these hills ran the river Eden, (not the Eden of Cumberland, and perhaps too obscure a stream to be found in any map,) but a stream so clear, that every pebble of its bed might be seen through its wave.

Rushing among steep banks, fringed with birch groves, and occasionally broken into falls, it hurried away with a sparkling velocity, which carried the fancy along with it. The height on which the village stood, forming part of its north-eastern bank, the window of Honoria's room commanded great part of the river's course; and in moonlight nights she was accustomed to sit there, enjoying the moonshine, and the sound of bells ringing from some village church at a distance: or, perhaps, listening to the humbler chime of a passing wagon.

In spring, the wind, when it blew off the hills, came laden with the smell of violets; and in summer, with that of heath-blossoms, and the wilding rose.

Honoria never could resist their sweet breathings—she used to carry her book or her work there to the rectory meadows, and seated on the soft green turf, bask in the sunshine. Sometimes little children were her companions, for whom she delighted to make daisy necklaces: oftener, only her uncle's sheep and the dog.

In her idler moods she lay listening to the echoes with which the hills were full; pleased with their gradations; by turn amused or soothed by the different sounds they repeated. Sometimes delivering herself up to that sweet vague of thought, as Madame de Stael would have called it, which for all minds of sensibility ends so surely in sadness.

What woman's heart is there that does not feel, or remember to have felt such sadness, gathering round their darkening thoughts like mist on the green hill's side?—it is a melancholy without object; yet it overwhelms the soul while it lasts, with a feeling of misery

which is deemed, perhaps is, prophetic of future sorrows—it is peculiar to that otherwise blissful season, early youth.

And is there a young heart that does not know by experience an emotion as undefinable, though of a different nature? a vague joy—an eagerness of expectation of we know not what, which quickens the current in our veins, gives animation to every thought; every movement, and seems to rise as spontaneously in our hearts as the spring flowers do from the earth; it comes on us with the sunshine and the shower, the song of the birds, and the scent of the violet: it often withers in us with the summer rose, or the leaves of autumn.

But who was Honor O'Hara? The orphan niece of Mr. Meredith: his only sister had married an Irish officer—she died in giving Honoria birth; the regiment was quartered in Ireland when this sad event took place, and the motherless babe was committed to the kindness of Major O'Hara's aunt. Honoria remained with her, till death (which meanwhile robbed her of her father) removed the good old maiden from earth; and Honoria was then left with sixteen hundred pounds in the funds, and abundance of Irish pride in her heart. The orphan of her sister naturally fell now to the share of the Reverend Mr. Meredith, his richer brother being married and resident in India; and as Honoria's little fortune could supply her with pocket money, clothe herself, and pay the wages and board of the faithful nurse who would not be separated from her, even his kindless wife could not oppose her reception under the roof of her husband. The orphan had now been their inmate two years.

Honoria was just at that April-time of life, and of that April temper which vibrates between smiles and tears; a romantic heart and a gay humour! which was to predominate in the woman, events alone could decide: At seventeen she was a curious mixture of giddiness and sensibility—of proud notions and active humility.

Mrs. Ally O'Hara, by whom the child had been

brought up, had lived near a small garrison town on the north coast of Ireland; she was of the best Hibernian blood—and the pension by which she was maintained in dignified superiority over her neighbours, had been earned by the honourable services of Mrs. Ally's father as head of a great public office. Though their family property was all wasted, its shade haunted the memories of many in Ballygarry; keeping up the respect due to persons who had once owned all the land between Lochcoin and Knocklade. Mrs. Ally O'Hara was therefore *the great lady* of Ballygarry; her grand-niece become at fifteen its *great beauty*—and as Honoria had been made her aunt's companion from infancy, she was soon the principal personage both at home and abroad.

Mrs. Ally had gala days, in which officers of army and navy, besides a few young men indigenous to the soil, flourished conspicuously—and as Mrs. Ally was always to be considered *the great lady*, and as it was worth the pretty Irish girls' while, to purchase their darling idols—agreeable Military—they did not scruple complimenting the aunt upon her condescension, and the niece upon her beauty;—and this they did so often, and so ably, that the young orphan insensibly grew to think as highly of her family consequence as of her sparkling eyes.

Honoria really was charming—and being then at that childish age which privileges men in telling her she is so, the young red and blue coats were not slow in availing themselves of this privilege—and the fond nurse and admiring foster-sister were perpetually repeating what was said of the beautiful Miss Honoria's "flower of a face." Never was poor girl, therefore, in a fairer way of being made a coquette.

From this evil, however, she was preserved, by extravagant notions of her importance as a descendant of kings: to be omnipotent, by means of her beauty, was a secondary sort of triumph. She was, besides, fortified against such an ignoble propensity as flirting, by certain, perhaps fantastic, notions of not merely loving only once during the most prolonged life, but

doing it with a delicacy which would make it impossible for her to receive an instant's gratification from any man's attentions, except those of the one beloved. Thus, she came from Ireland with all the ease-bestowing consciousness of beauty, without its frequent concomitant, thirst for conquest. The beautiful Honor O'Hara, as she was styled in Ballygarry, was not however strictly worthy of that title; hers was that kind of face in which the light, the roses, the picturesque varying of countenance and complexion peculiar to unbroken youth, passed admirably for beauty. Her features were softly moulded, and in harmony with each other: that was all their merit. There was, however, a wild brightness in her large black eyes—a glitter on her teeth—and a peachy richness in the colouring of her cheek, which the gipsy darkness of her clear smooth skin seemed intended to heighten in effect. A painter, certainly, would not have called her beautiful: though he might have given his best picture for the privilege of making what are termed *studies of her*.

Honor's figure, too, was charming—habituated in her own careless country, to that happy indifference about dress, which remote from slovenliness, leaves the figure to its own easy form and motion—while, other ladies were laced within an inch of their lives, unable to bend in any other fashion than that of a jointed doll, she was seen swaying about like a young larch, as the breezes of youth and gayety impelled. Nature indeed had so exquisitely defined the swell and slenderness of the slight waist, and rounded form, that no covering, however ill-made, could disguise their proportions,—none enhance their loveliness.

Honor was singularly graceful; possibly from the very freedom of dress and movement just described. She never thought how she was looking when met in a fresh morning, running over the hills with her hat half blown off her head, all her locks scattered, and her cloak escaping from her laughing struggle to keep it folded round her. She never thought it might look inelegant when she sat down on some three-legged

stool at the foot of a Village Goody,—her elbow on her knees,—her hand crushing half the ringlets of her hair over one side of her glowing face,—and while loosening the knotted handkerchief from her throat, gazing up in the face of her companion, asking some favourite legend of the Cheviots.

She never thought how she was looking at those times ; and yet more than once, her figure, thus accidentally seen by wandering sons of genius, was transferred to the sketch-book of the painter, and the tablets of the poet.

By some craft or mystery, known only to herself, our heroine had the extraordinary power of giving *new expression to old clothes*. If she tied a certain large straw hat closely down with a silk handkerchief, she might have gone to a masquerade as a gipsy,—if she allowed the same hat to stand wide, with streamers of ribbon, and a few wild flowers twined round its low crown, she was a shepherdess,—cast the hat off, and she was a quaker in her close lawn cap,—put that away, and twist the long ringlets of her forehead with the rest of her hair, and the finely shaped head, the expressive brow, and the large lifted eye made her a Sappho.

After this detail of her natural advantages, it is mortifying to give the sorry catalogue of her accomplishments.

Honorina had a genius for drawing : that is, she sketched rapidly and freely the forms of trees, old buildings, cattle, children, in short whatever picturesque group or object caught her attention : but she knew nothing of working them up into lady-like or workman-like drawings, fit for display. She sang as wood-larks do, sweetly, wildly,—her taste was born of her sensibility,—her tones were rich and downy, and had a certain pathos in them, which deepened the tender sadness of Scottish melodies, and those of her native land. She could also accompany herself in a self-taught way upon the Irish harp.

Beyond this accomplishment Honorina went not.

She could dance, it is true, and dance gayly, gracefully, —for she had a fine ear, a light heart, and yet lighter foot; but she knew only the few steps necessary to carry an unambitious person safely down that interminable avenue, a country dance, (which, like all other avenues, by the way, is out of fashion,) and might more easily have outran a deer than executed the minuet de la cour, or a French quadrille.

She could, however, work like Arachne, arrange nosegays like Glycerium, make cakes and comfits like Mrs. Glasse, and dress herself at an instant's warning, for a ball, out of a few ribbons. She told ghost stories better than any body: she had always some little comic or touching anecdote to tell after her tour among the cotters, or some amusing sally ready to answer the bantering of a lively companion. She was always in good humour, though not always in good spirits. She gossipped with the aged poor, played with their grandchildren, patted their curs, fondled their kittens, helped them with a little money when they were pinched to pay a doctor's bill; and neither playing the inquisitor into their concerns nor their consciences; neither wearying them with lectures, nor pampering them with alms; bettered the hearts she was warming towards herself.

In winter she helped the hobbling sexton to decorate the church with Christmas: and never before were sprigs of box and branches of holly stuck with so much effect. On Mayday she assisted the children in making their garlands; dressed their little heads and bosoms with ribbons and flowers; nay, provided many of the flowers herself. Honoria could not live without a garden; and finding only a wilderness bearing that name at the rectory, she expended a trifling sum, and employed a very indigent old man, in creating one on her favourite hill's side. Her uncle allowed her to steal a bit of ground from his meadow there, and she in return supplied his study table with the common flowers of every season. Thus she pleased herself, and employed a person deemed past his work.

Honoria lived before Bell and Lancaster were talked of ; and I must confess she had not the genius to strike out any thing like their systems. Every one must in some degree go along with the stream of their times : so Honoria living at a period in which the education bestowed upon the lower classes was even lower than the remuneration given for their labour, contented herself with doing them every kind office in her power ; inventing little modes of employment for boys and girls, quite big enough for mischief, though not for ordinary hard work ; checking them firmly in every evil propensity discovered by the frequent opportunities this afforded her of developing their faults ; encouraging them to mutual friendliness, activity, humanity, and cleanliness, by her own example, and by substantial tokens of affectionate approval.

Her own habits were incitements to industry : she was rarely seen, even out of doors, doing nothing. If she were not weeding or planting in her garden, she was studying French grammar in the hollow trunk of a broken oak tree overgrown with ivy and wild flowers, which she had cleared of rubbish and used as an arbour ; or she was leaning on the mossy slope of the hill's brow with her knitting. Such was the activity of her mind, nay, we will add, its sincere desire of being useful, that she never spent half an hour with a sick or infirm cottager without asking for some bit of work to be doing for them meanwhile.

Half Honoria's virtues, at present, however, were simple instincts, yet they had beneficial effects ; some of her failings, even, blundered out real good. The proud delicacy of her own character made her sensitive for the similar feeling she fancied in others ; she therefore frequently created wants for herself, only that she might employ a poor neighbour, and so make him earn the shilling which she would otherwise have given. Insensibly this had fruits : the poorest cotters acquired the habit of thinking alms a disgrace ; and never heard their children begging halfpence for showing the road, or opening a gate, without rebuking them into shame.

Honorina was truly loved by the whole labouring and menial class: her little passing joke, or soothing word, immediately after one of her aunt's domestic whirlwinds, frequently banished from a servant's mind its sudden purpose of staying no longer with such a vixen as Madam Meredith.

One of the greatest gainers at Edenfell by the importation of our lively Irish girl was Honorina's uncle. He had got some one to powder his few dark hairs and bald head; fold up his cassocks; keep him in neatly trimmed bands; undog's-ear the books he was too apt to disfigure by that careless fashion; mend his pens; stitch his sermons; *red-up* his room (as the Scotch call putting things in order;) and bring a flower for the button hole of his coat every summer morning. More than this, he had now a person able and willing to throw herself between him and the hottest fire of his lady's wrath. In the season of domestic storm, (which generally raged highest upon washing days) Honorina was ever in the way to fly down from her quiet aëry, at the first angry sounds of her aunt's voice, and by some opportune question attract the lightning to her own head; affording her meek relative opportunity to secure the shelter of his study. After this she was just as cheerfully ready to force a smile by a grave story of Banshees; or to engage him to forget his hapless lot, by talking with him on the most interesting of all subjects, our hopes in a happier world. There were choice moments in which he would tell, and she would listen to, the pathetic tale of the lovely Bell Foster's cruelty, and subsequent shame. At these times, tears were shed between them: for the first love of Mr. Meredith's youth had never been displaced in his solitary heart by any tenderness for the wife he would have loved had she deserved it; and Honorina's prejudices were all in favour of inextinguishable passions. Thus the uncle and niece grew into confidence and affection; and the former soon found, that with one kind being to soothe him under the inflictions of a kindless one, he might yet enjoy much of rational comfort:

It cannot be said that he added greatly to his niece's stock of worldly wisdom.

Edenfell did not boast many gentry among its inhabitants : what there were, however, were unanimous in their liking for a young creature, whose constant freshness of spirits, and good-humour, enlivened every body ; revived the decaying ; and gave an impulse to every plan of innocent diversion.

Honorina had her admirers in this set ; (not to mention the young clodhoppers who gazed and worshipped from behind their ploughs as she passed,) a squire or two ; the young tutor at His Grace of ——'s ; and every luckless officer sent recruiting within two hours' march of the rectory. These she neither shunned nor encouraged, simply disregarding them ; for alas ! she fancied herself (as I believe most young ladies do on the threshold of this world's masquerade,) destined for some transcendent somebody, whose portrait she found in every poetical hero, and for whose appearance she was daily watching.

In Ireland, poor Honorina had been her great-aunt's reader ; and the stately Mrs. Ally relished no books except antique romances, and the poetry of Elizabeth's day. Novels she disdained. Honorina quickly imbibed a taste in sympathy with the uncorrupted and inexperienced season of girlhood ; and as she learned to like those works best, which draw the most extravagant pictures of human perfection and mortal love : as she had no judicious friend to correct the mistakes of her imagination ; her head was soon stuffed with all sorts of erroneous notions and wild expectations.

Luckily for Honorina, she had a sharper appetite for reading, than her grand-aunt. The library of her grandfather furnished books of different qualities ; which, though they did not give her an insight into the modes and manners of the acting world, helped her to some knowledge of our mixed nature and future accountableness ; and gave to her intuitive admiration of excellence, the dignity of principle.

It was, however, still only upon the sublime virtues that Honoria deigned to fix the eyes which had thus early accustomed themselves to look on Spenser's Red-cross Knight, and Sydney's Pyrocles, as living men. And as none of her Edensfell neighbours had ever been known to cast themselves from a precipice, or mount a scaffold, or harangue at the stake in honour of freedom or friendship, she overlooked their quiet worth, and put them long aside, as inoffensive poor creatures.

Most of the inhabitants in and about Edensfell were, indeed, nothing better than common useful dowlass: but there were a few exceptions, if Honoria would have allowed herself to think so.

The first of these, Mrs. Preston, lived a short walk from the village: her pretty residence, which had once been a farm-house, ought to have had such a creature, as Honor O'Hara to grace it; for it was picturesquely placed among green banks and lofty trees; and, being built on the site of an extensive abbey, had many beautiful portions of the ruin remaining near it, to tempt romantic inclination to wander and muse by moonlight.

The front of the house was nearly as completely covered with ivy, as the standing arches of the abbey; so that in all seasons it looked like a bower. It hung on the lower slope of the fell; and as it was looked up to from the river side, the bright space of emerald green it stood on, with its darker boundaries of nut-trees and tall evergreens, were always pleasing to be seen glittering in the sunshine or the moonlight.

The mistress of Hazeldean was the widow of an eminent physician who practised in the county, and took the resolution of marrying her, from witnessing her exemplary and cheering attendance, of two years' continuance, upon a peevish bedridden aunt. The pretty Mary's blooming face, perfect guilelessness, and natural propriety of thought and manner, finished the conquest of his pride or prudence; and at fifty, Dr. Preston married a young woman of three and twenty, the daughter of a substantial yeoman, only a yeoman!

He left her a widow, ten years afterwards, with two children, and an easy income.

Mrs. Preston, at sixty, was as single-hearted, as guileless, as confiding in all her fellow-creatures, as she had been at fifteen. She was also as much inclined to kindness and cheerfulness. She still saw persons and events through the same blessed medium, a contented disposition : the evils of life she still took as matters of course, its agreeable passages as calls for glad thankfulness ; and the recital of a misfortune, the detail of a noble action, a generous sentiment, or one of Honor O'Hara's melancholy ballads, nay, even the repetition of stories familiar to her childhood, would still float her bright brown eyes with tears.

Sweet was the smile ever accompanying that overflow ; for it was the smile of a heart full of goodness ; unconscious of its own worth ; humbly, happily, referring all human excellence to its rightful bestower, that gracious Being who moulds our hearts at will.

Dear and fondly-remembered friend of my earliest years ! thou whose revered image my hand has unconsciously attempted to trace in this ideal portrait, accept the poor tribute ! Thou hast long been gone down to the dust, with all thy charms of countenance and voice : thy virtues, thy blessedness, thy usefulness, are no more in this world ; but they are living in the memory of those who had the happiness of witnessing them ; and they may have sown the seed, perhaps, of much that is estimable in their lives !

Mrs. Preston loved and indulged young people ; and most of the young men and young women who gathered round her plentiful tea-table, making her little confidences, or raising her easily raised laugh, had been parts of the joyous group of girls and boys which were duly invited every Christmas, Twelfth Night, and Easter Monday, to romping and feasting at Mrs. Preston's ; thus she was looked on by them all as a sort of third parent. Honor O'Hara called her their Sunday mother, in contradistinction to those every-day ones, who are under the unfortunate necessity of not letting

their children's lives be all one holyday of ease and pleasure.

From the sort of women her daughters had turned out, it might be supposed that Mrs. Preston's indulgent benevolence of character was not sufficiently balanced by vigorous intellect : this was not the case ; it merely happened, that distrusting her own ability to teach or see properly taught what she had never learned, she consented to send them to a boarding-school in Yorkshire, to be under the eye of their father's sister, the wife of a barrister there ; and this lady being a silly pretender to accomplishments and society of which she knew scarcely any thing, they returned from their seven years' schooling, and their twice as many months holydays at her house, just such Misses as might be expected. The Miss Prestons were very scantily allowed in understanding from the first. Mrs. Fillagree's school and Mrs. Blagdon's coteries consumed their whole stock of common sense. They were, however, good girls, inheriting their mother's kindness of nature, without her loveable simplicity. Miss Dulcy's ambition had been fired by one of the teachers at Doncaster, who wrote verses and lived on visions ; she aimed, therefore, at the sentimental. Miss Dulcy talked like a book, in phrases absolutely unknown to common conversation. There were no such vulgar words in her vocabulary as crying, thinking, walking, talking ; every body wept, or ruminated, or strayed, or discoursed, with her. If she asked a person to sit down, she hoped they would *occupy* a chair. Miss Dulcy copied out the elegiac stanzas and sonnets from newspapers and magazines ; she painted allegorical screens and devices on souvenirs ; she collected the autographs of poetasters and Blue-stockings ; she haunted churchyards in pursuit of epitaphs ; and she religiously believed in the mortal existence of Goëthe's Werter.

To have seen Goëthe himself, or any other sentimental lion, Miss Dulcy would cheerfully have undertaken a pilgrimage through England : but she lived

before lions were to be seen in our streets, as they now are, in flocks, like sheep; when every family of any taste or fashion has their own especial lion; every agreeable woman her lion; following them as docilely and affectionately as that of Androcles did his preserver.

And now I must be permitted to congratulate this noble order of quadrupeds upon the great revolution which has taken place in public opinion concerning their nature and habits. Fear of lions is now become more ridiculous than the fear of ghosts: distaste to them, *very bad taste* indeed! They are no longer considered savage and unsocial, devourers and destroyers, issuing from dens of dirt and desolation; but civil, tameable creatures, possessing wit enough to have decent shelters and laws for themselves. The next step will be their general admission into all the blessings and privileges of those happy domestic animals who pur or stretch at their ease by the parlour fire, whilst the poor lion is exhibiting.

Such a consummation is devoutly to be wished; for even the slandered cat never has been more vilified than has this king of beasts.

To return to the family at Hazeldean. Miss Bella's mania ran in a different channel. She pretended to perfection in (*l'usage du monde*), upon the strength of having gone once to Harrowgate with her Doncaster aunt, and boarded three weeks, in the same house with two baronets' widows, and a viscount's ninth unmarried sister. She affected to be in the secrets of all the fashionable world; nay, to have a second-sight of every important event about to befall them. Nothing extraordinary happened to a coronetted individual that she did not, on the explosion of the wonder, remind her neighbours of certain unintelligible whispers, sighs, and smiles of hers just before it became public. She often retailed paragraphs from the modish pages of the day, so embellished as to pass for parts of epistolary confidences to herself. She presided over all guessers at those mysterious allusions and provoking blanks

after initials in which such newspapers abound. She was ever the first to lower or raise the various parts of her dress according to the latest fashion recorded in magazines; and by the unwearied use of the cabalistic words, "horrid! vulgar! Gothic! voted detestable!" kept the whole *little* village in awe.

If Miss Bella Preston once pronounced a head-dress "*a has-been*," though it made the wearer look like a milliner's angel, it was cast from its high place; and if she pronounced a man "*un-presentable*," it was too probable that she shamed some girl out of an existing affection for him,—certain, that she prevented him from ever inspiring another within the jurisdiction of her sovereignty. Every person is said to have some quality or acquirement upon which they secretly pride themselves, and are lauded by others; Miss Bella's self idolatry had for its object her felicitous memory of certain French phrases to which she used to listen at Harrowgate with admiring emulation, regretting bitterly having never tried at school to do more than read her French lessons over her stupid governess's shoulder. By some fatal imperfection either of her ear or her organs of speech, Miss Bella failed in pronouncing these phrases with an accuracy at all equal to the fidelity with which she remembered them; nay, I grieve to own, she sometimes displaced the adjective so as to produce serious consequences to all such of her hearers as were capable of relishing the ridiculous, and incapable of concealing it. The solemnity of knowledge with which Miss Bella uttered her blunders was irresistible.

Yet abating mistakes and trifles like these, the Misses Preston were good-humoured, warm-hearted women, without a spark of envy in their dispositions, or a drop of vinegar in their tempers: they were not ill-looking either; but unluckily, nature had made a gross mistake in the allotment of their persons; for it was the fashion to be *en bon point*, and Miss Bella was thin; and it was sentimental to be slender, and Miss Dalcy was fatter than one of those shapely animals

whose unctuous bodies furnish nourishment for human hair, and advertisements for newspapers : however, the one sister lived in the hope of waxing and the other of wasting, and their friends took care never to tell them the unsavoury truth that neither of them altered a hair's breadth.

Hazeldean was the only house belonging to Edenfell where the higher and inferior order of county gentry might meet occasionally : but Mrs. Preston had the good sense not to attempt forcing prejudices, or the removal of those landmarks of society, without which this world would be a scene of far greater contention, violence, wrong, insult, at best confusion, than it is at present. She sorted her company well ; matching their habits and breeding : and if inharmonious persons met by chance during a morning visit, she managed them with equal regard to the feelings of each ; never taking the least offence if a stiff old squire took his leave on the announcement of Mr. Chaplain of New Lodge.

Mrs. Preston remembered she was a yeoman's daughter ; she was frankly social, therefore, with those of her acquaintance who, rising into gentry by dint of money made and freeholds purchased, were treated civilly by the ancient lords of the soil, yet steadily kept at a distance. As the eccentric clever Dr. Preston's wife, and since as his widow, she visited, and was visited by all, except the high nobility of the county ; her house, consequently was the neutral ground upon which both parties met, and met amicably. At her house Honor O'Hara had made most of her multifarious conquests.

The next place in point of attraction to Hazeldean (before it in consequence) was Arthur's Court : a venerable mansion covering a great extent of ground ; having a large front, widely extended wings, and an endless train of useless offices.

A stately portico, with the family arms above it, finely cut in stone, surmounted by peaceful emblems, and martial trophies, gave dignity to its appearance. The entrance was at the extremity of one of the wings,

to which a broad and branching avenue of enormous walnut trees conducted from the ordinary road.

In days past, the great size of the house was excellently balanced by the dimensions of the park, of which it formed the central point; its offices were then filled with servants and retainers, and its many stables and many stalls crowded with the horses of men-at-arms.

Both stables and offices had now few tenants; and chief part of what was the park, being turned into sundry money-returning pastures and arables, the house itself stood at the extremity of what remained unploughed or uncloved, and was said, therefore, to have a very fine lawn in its front.

Behind it sloped the gardens; spacious, still old fashioned, abundant in fruits, flowers, clipped trees, curious arbours, marble basins, and tritons spouting water from conchs. The gardens themselves, lying much below the house, were entirely overlooked by the windows of the back apartments, and were descended into by a noble flight of stone steps from a terrace running the whole length of the house.

The long-line of deep embayed windows which the back front of Arthur's Court presented, was exactly matched by the formal lines of posts and chains festooning each side of this spacious walk: yet that formality was not displeasing; taste having originally planted honeysuckles by the side of every post, and time having wreathed their flowers with no ungraceful hand among the heavy carvings of the wood and the links of the iron.

The windows, too, had their ornaments, in the rich stained glass of which they were composed. Facing the north-west, at the hour of sunset they became glorious to those without, while throwing many a mellow hue upon the thoughts as well as faces of those within.

In this part of the mansion was the picture gallery; a stately avenue of all the beauties, warriors, statesmen, spendthrifts, and spinsters, who had borne the name of Fitz Arthur from the time of the Conquest to

the coming in of the Hanoverian race. This was the only avenue belonging to the family, (except the fruitful walnut-tree one,) which the axe had spared, and the hammer failed to make havoc with. The present possessor of this fine old seat was the representative of a very ancient and honourable family, whose wealth had been gradually diminishing for the last two centuries: the reason was obvious; they neither made nor saved money; they married, principally from motives of affection; they had large families; they were given to hospitality, and a system of indulgence to tenants; they were, besides, unluckily addicted in all political squabbles to espouse the weakest side. Perhaps upon the same principle with which a man coming unawares into a brawl, instinctively lifts his arm in defence of the person likeliest to be worsted.

Thus the Fitz Arthurs had suffered in life and limb and property for Charles the First, and James the Second; nay, had even contrived to get a share of damage in the misguided enterprise of the Duke of Monmouth: a horse suspected to have been furnished to the princely fugitive from the field of Culloden by one of the young sons, (a volunteer in the royal army,) cost his father a fair manor and goodly fishery to a crown lawyer. Sir Everard Fitz Arthur, the present Baronet, did not degenerate from many of the virtues, nor escape some of the failings of his ancestors: he was notoriously the kindest-hearted man in the county; for he let his servants cheat him, his trades-people impose upon him, vagrants molest him, homeless animals quarter themselves upon his demesnes, tenants remain in arrears, &c.; he was unwearied in neighbourly acts of hospitality and liberality; nay, he had bailed half the extravagant young men out of "durance vile," simply because they were neighbours' sons, and perhaps paid their debts afterwards, lest they should be expelled college.

Having lately become surety for a government collector, and been obliged to pay five thousand pounds

for the fellow's baseness, he was now professedly living on a retrenching system, vowing he would henceforth think of paying no debts, save his own.

Sir Everard had been twice married : his first lady left only two sons, children of six and seven years ; the eldest a fine, open-hearted young man, lived to the age of three-and-twenty, and was then prematurely cut off by imprudently attempting to ford a river unusually swollen by heavy rains.

The second son now heir to the title and estate, was an officer of cavalry, and being in India with his regiment upon active service when the news arrived of his sadly-acquired consequence, did not deem it right in a soldier to ask leave of absence, or to effect an exchange into some regiment at home : he remained abroad, waiting a termination of hostilities. Sir Everard's offspring by "his second venture," as the old genealogies spell and designate a second marriage, were more numerous : but a few years gradually strewed them, and finally their mother, on the same earth with his first wife and first born ; and there now remained only a poor, feeble, yet interesting boy of fourteen, who, in consequence of an accident during childhood, was sickly and helpless ; and a school-boy of twelve.

A maiden lady distantly related to Sir Everard, kept his house, and acquitted herself laudably in all the offices of providing for and helping company at the good Baronet's table. So admirably was she fitted for this purpose, and so discreetly did she rate man's estimate of the real delightfulness of a woman's conversation when past fifty, that she was never heard to utter more voice than was necessary to inquire, what gentlemen would be helped to at dinner ? whether they preferred green to black tea at breakfast ? and to employ with precision the needful technical terms at a game of whist. It is a work of supererogation to add, that she was never heard to scold, even though the constant object of the school-boy Fitz Arthur's mischief ; than whom a more provoking, overbearing, mischievous wight never existed.

Delaval Fitz Arthur, Sir Everard's heir, had entered the army with well-founded expectations of rapid promotion, by means of his family wealth and influence; yet was he now, at the age of five-and-twenty, only a captain of dragoons. His troop was earned by the skill and intrepidity with which he conducted a difficult attack upon one of Tippoo Saib's important posts, in the Ghauts of the Mysore. Adequate sums for the purchase of such a commission at a much earlier period in the young officer's military history had been lodged more than once by Sir Everard in the hands of his agent; but the money always found a different destination; and Delaval was either too delicate, or too high-minded, or too dutiful, to remonstrate. His father, like most men of boundless good nature, and circumscribed intellect, living in the habit of benefiting every human creature except the very one whom he loved most, and who best deserved his kindness. At the period of the collector's defalcation, while Sir Everard was groaning over his own unwise confidence, his unconsciousson was making the best of his way to England, with a desperate liver complaint to balance against the joy of returning home. His return, indeed, was the consequence of this complaint, for the war was not ended; and, just landed from Bengal after an absence of eight years, he was negotiating for a majority in a regiment come home in the same fleet, when the news of his father's pecuniary misfortune and sudden retrenchments was accidentally told him at Falmouth by a relation. He wrote immediately to his agent to stop all proceedings about the exchange, generously resigned his own wishes, and hurried to Edenfell, to appropriate the legacy of two thousand pounds left him by a superior officer to the restoration of some of his father's hastily abandoned comforts.

The expected return of Captain Fitz Arthur, whom all the elder inhabitants of Edenfell remembered as a child and youth with particular affection, was an epoch in the history of the village, and, as such, formed a fre-

quent theme of discourse. Sir Everard himself loved to dwell upon it, and he talked incessantly of this excellent son, without the ordinary fear of repetitions, that of wearying his hearers. On these occasions, he never failed conducting his auditors into the gallery at Arthur's Court, to exhibit Delaval's picture, done when a boy of eleven; ever accompanying the exhibition by the pathetic exclamation of, "O that my poor boy may be like this now!"

Honor O'Hara, to whom this picture was oftener shown than to any one else, never looked on it without secretly thinking it represented the most ill-favoured, glum school-boy, that ever sulked through a sitting.

A *sitting*, however, it was obvious poor Delaval had not been indulged in. It was painted standing, and standing in what the itinerant artist called a *nat'ral poster*. This posture was so unnatural, that the boy was actually obliged to be held up by a servant, during the whole execution of himself and his picture.

The figure *stood*, indeed, with his legs across, leaning upon a huge paper kite, to which it threatened total destruction, maugre the limner's ingenious device for preserving the equilibrium, by sticking one arm a-kimbo on the hip.

The costume of poor Delaval was quite worthy of the commemorating pencil, being a shapeless suit, intended to fit the body and limbs, and so produce the effect of a naked, drab-coloured child: but failing of that notable purpose, yet not wide enough for folds; being withal provided with lines of braided work, reaching at due distances from the chin to the extremity of a waist cunningly extended by the tailor, (of course for the sake of having a greater quantum of stuff to charge for,) gave the whole figure more the semblance of a ladder than that of a human body.

To Delaval's hair nature had been liberal, and on the real boy it waved from his brow and round his neck in rich and comely clusters: the artist, meritoriously

anxious to evince gratitude for patronage, had elongated this waving hair far below the shoulders, so that it now hung in two straight lines parallel with the cheeks, till it reached the breast; where suddenly taking a preposterous fancy of curling, it bushed forth into an absolute cape, leaving the nondescript face within, to be mistaken for some animal between an owl and a lap-dog.

Upon the face itself the artist had exhausted the secrets of his art: he was professedly of the school of Guido, being *chaste and severe*.

His intentions were faultless—his pencil faithless; so that under his hand even the youthful flesh of a child resembled pewter more than pearls. True to this principle of severity, the boy's features were rendered with relentless exactness; and as they were then in that unpruned state which nature's finger sometimes leads into regularity of beauty, sometimes cherishes into luxuriant expression, divested now of their juvenile glow, and given in shades of pea-green and light slate-colour, the whole face stood staring with a pair of eyes like bottled gooseberries—the very effigy of rueful ugliness.

Sir Everard's eye for painting was as incapable of education as some ears are for music:—he literally could not distinguish between a Raphael and a sign-post; though he possessed some rare specimens of that divine master in his eating-hall: his easy good nature made him a most persuadable person; he was, therefore, persuaded, at the time, to believe in the likeness of this daub; and since then had daily gazed on the memorial of an absent son till the perfidious copy supplanted the original in his memory.

"There's my Delaval!" would he exclaim, with an air of satisfaction, every time he showed this base counterfeit to a stranger; and immediately associating every well-known perfection with that son's image, never reflected that by-standers saw in it only a lubberly lad.

"Well! he is a good creature I dare say," Honoria would smile and say to herself at such times; "but he's hideously plain."

The arrival of Captain Fitz Arthur gave her little reason to alter her opinion, though he was not in the least like his portrait. His features were far better—his complexion much worse; he was half dead with biliousness and sea-sickness, and he was moreover worn to a shadow. There was nothing, in short, to redeem Captain Fitz Arthur for an instant in her mind, except a pair of large, deep-blue eyes, (marvellously shaded with long dark lashes,) the soft expression of which often threw over his sallow countenance almost the charm of beauty. Having thus favoured my fair readers with the glimpse of a well-born lover for my heroine, (for, unless her eyes miss fire most unaccountably, Honor O'Hara *must* hit a man placed in Delaval Fitz Arthur's situation,) I will now take the liberty of stepping back to complete my tour of the immediate neighbourhood.

“In an opposite direction to Arthur's Court, full five miles from Edentell-end, stand the handsome house and grounds (as the Road-book expresses it,) of Samuel Shafto, Esq. M. P., skirting the celebrated park and chase of Ravenshaw, the seat of the Right Hon. Earl Wearmouth.” The last named place describes itself: a nobleman's mansion, with all its appurtenances of woods and manors, rooks and deer; now rarely visited by its owner, a man in the meridian of life, holding a high station in the ministry, consequently obliged to live nearly always in or about London.

The other place was a thorough modern mansion; with a white front. French windows; verandahs; green blinds; orange trees in tubs, and exotics in china pots, crowding up the space just before the entrance; invisible fences; conservatories; pineries; graperies; an ice house; a show-dairy; all contained within two circles; the first comprising a lawn with its well-assorted shrubbery; the second a wider sweep of young plantations destined to grow up into a most *perfect place*, duly dotted with clumps, and environed, according to the best rules of art, by a belt of orderly firs.

The owner of this mansion, though he sat in parliament, and might be expected to carry some talent thither,

either had none to carry, or wore it within him, as the Miss Primroses did each her guinea in her pocket, without spending it: or imagining that, as he came in only for a borough, he might be excused thinking as well as speaking among the more dignified personages representing counties, or sitting there in virtue of ministerial offices,—whatever influenced him, influenced Mr. Shafto was, to sit still and say nothing, let what would be going on: he had, however, one virtue—conspicuous attachment to the representative of his King, whoever he might be, at the head of affairs. Mr. Shafto always voted for the Crown; never regarding who came and asked his vote. He was much too magnanimous to show the least resentment, much too respectful to feel the least dissatisfaction, at the dismissal of his dearest friend from a place of public trust; thus he always stood, though hosts fell around him.

The rent-roll of the Shafto estate did not exceed 5000*l.* per annum: this thirty or forty years ago, in a northern county, would have been sufficient for a very handsome style of living; but Mrs. Shafto found it too small (even with some secret additions,) for *the appearance* she deemed it proper to make; and choosing to be thought the wife of a man of 10,000*l.* a year, gave herself the full consequence of such a reputation, at the expense of substantial ease.

Mrs. Shafto had five daughters to marry, and one younger son to make great friends for—her eldest of course was to have the estate. She calculated the enormous expense of country-house-keeping after the old fashion of general invitations, abundant dinners, flowing wines: the possible advantage from it was slender in comparison with every second winter spent in London, in a show-house, with equipage and liveries fit for the Ring in Hyde Park, a box at the Opera, balls, and fashionable dress. She *took her partie*. Mrs. Shafto became suddenly exceedingly fine; introduced the town style (as she chose to term it) among her simpler neighbours; fainted at the sight of plain joints even on her side-table; denounced all plenteous boards; gave only

small, elegant dinners of French cookery ; turned pale if she saw a young lady drink any liquid stronger than iced-water, or heard any one ask twice for any thing save vegetables ; insisted upon her husband's abolition of the old custom of sitting after dinner, when the ladies were withdrawn, longer than ten minutes : and so completely established the system of starvation in her house, (adroitly coupling it with a notion of elegance,) that her very servants melted away without complaint, for the sake of serving so elegant a mistress ; and her three eldest daughters in their trapesey Grecian dresses, with long genteel faces, and *vastly fashionable* bending figures, were not inaptly caricatured as three willows, with the title of the *Shades* painted below them.

A gallant wit of their acquaintance having interlined the word Elysian between the article and the noun, the caricature turned into a compliment ; and the Miss Shaftos, known as *the Elysian Shades*, rose into consequence with the Newspapers, and Kensington-Garden haunters, for a whole season of opera and park going.

Proud of this notoriety of *the second table*, the three sister shades returned to Shafto Park more insupportably disdainful and supercilious than ever. Importing to Northumberland the new fashion of short waists and adhesive drapery, each believed herself the Lady C—C— of the county ; and because their skins were like lime, their eyes a sort of water colour, they dared to class them with the breathing, beaming, sparkling alabaster of complexion, the almost purple light of those goddess-like eyes which we still see kindling and glowing in their painted resemblances. Upon that form of a Venus, shaded only by *one* graceful robe, the eye might glance with admiration ; but on those of the spiky Miss Shaftos, so unattired, to glance, was to poniard yourself.

During the period of these ladies' last visit to London, Honor O'Hara had arrived from Ireland. As their mamma did not admit the vulgar Mrs. Meredith into her visiting-book (and who can wonder at that !) it is not marvellous that our heroine's very existence was unknown or unnoticed by any of them, till about twelve

months after her settlement at Edenfell ; when it suited Mrs. Shafto to write an exceedingly civil note (for Mrs. Shafto did all lady-like things in a lady-like manner) to their clergyman's wife, requesting permission to have the occasional use of a room at the rectory, to accommodate Signor Vocallino, who was about to pass six weeks at his Grace of ——'s, and had kindly consented to her earnest entreaty that he would give the Miss Shaftos a lesson twice a week, provided they met him half way. Edenfell just lay at the right point : so to the rectory it was agreed the Misses were to repair every Wednesday and Saturday, to squall in concert with the Signor, and stun the good minister while writing his sermon.

The first morning appointed for these ladies' appearance was somewhat pleasureably expected by Honoria. She was barely sixteen then, and she felt the want of acquaintance better suited to her taste and early habits than the untalented, half-rustic Miss Prestons, and others of the second order of gentry. She naturally reckoned securely upon intimacy (at least with herself,) succeeding to obligation on one side, and accommodation on the other. It could not enter into the head of an O'Hara, that she, the grand-daughter of an English country-gentleman, the daughter of an Irish one, bearing a commission in his Majesty's service—the niece, too, of a minister of our Established Church—saying nothing of her uncle in a high station abroad—could be considered as quite below the Miss Shaftos, who had but a country-gentleman for their father.

Honoria had been as much accustomed to play the *great lady of the place* at Bally-Garry as they were at Edenfell ; therefore, though she certainly felt humiliated, and disconcerted, and almost fretted, whenever she glanced at the dirt and disorder of all without and all within her present residence, the handsome, orderly house of her great-aunt Mrs. Ally, with its fair appointments of jaunting-car and well-clad serving men, rose in agreeable vision before her, and spoke of a home, in times past, as respectable, if not as fine, as Shafto Place.

At all events, Mrs. Meredith, upon whom the odium
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of vulgar sluttishness must fall, was no blood to her.—Hetty Macready, the indignant Hetty Macready, reminded her of this every day; finishing her hot-mouthed declaration, that “*she would spake* her mind to her own child, let Miss Honor frown ever so!” with these memorable words of true Irish transition from anger to fondness: “So you may hold up your head, jewel, anyhow, still; and sorrow on them says there’s a fairer face in the county! Didn’t you suck Hetty Macready’s milk? and who shall say black’s the white of a Macready’s eye? And is it the O’Haras, dear, that arn’t thought the good company all over the world?”

Honor believed they *were the good company* as religiously as her foster-mother did; and she held out her hand with a smile of tender pardon to the self-privileged follower who incurred her displeasure by uttering an opinion of her uncle’s wife.

Hetty took and fondled the little soft hand with her hands of horn, and her lips still red, but thin as scarlet thread. “And you’ll be giving this dilicat hand, darling, to the handsomest man that ever wore shamrock! and we’ll be after going back to our jewel of a country!—Och, and it’s Ireland all the world over! and the Irishman with his free heart and gen’rous hand! Blessings on the sowl of my country—England’s a pig-sty to it!”

To this assertion Honor could not assent: she recollected the failings of her country, with its virtues and its delightfulness; and she could never forget her first emotion upon entering the cotters’ houses in Northumberland; seeing their little homesteads of stall or sty, hen-house and patch of garden; and observing their beautifully-whitened hearths and fireplaces (white as the snows on the Cheviots) whence the smoke flew lightly away through conducting chimneys.

Pleasing Hetty Macready as well as she was able with her answer, she quitted her, on seeing the Shafto carriage driving up to the door.

The young ladies and their mamma encountered Mrs. Meredith doing the honours of their entrance, as they were proceeding, with lifted petticoats and carefully-

picked steps, through the front court. Many civil speeches, and *much obligeds*—many “My good madam, how sorry we are to incommode,” &c., reached the ear of Honoria, as she stood, half-expectant and half-welcoming, on the threshold of the opened parlour-door: but not a word of reply to her aunt’s servile entreaty that Mrs. Shafto would do her the great honour of stepping into her parlour, and taking some refreshment; at the same moment naming her husband’s niece, rather from the confusion occasioned by her awful sense of what she was soliciting, than from a wish of bringing Honoria forward.

“Pass on, my loves!” cried the mother, as her daughters, coldly bowing, and hurrying past Miss O’Hara, paused one well-bred instant, that they might not take precedence of their instructress in etiquette. The young ladies gladly obeyed, not, however, without an insolent glance back at Honoria, whose richly-dark face glowed up with a full flush of self-respect.

“Worthy Mr. Meredith’s niece, you say!” repeated Mrs. Shafto, with perfect condescension; “a pretty countenance—a very pretty countenance! You will not be suffered to keep her long with you, Mrs. Meredith: I see some vastly well-looking young men about our neighbourhood here that are most likely of your acquaintance. Chaplin’s sons, for instance. I do assure you,” (here the lady obligingly made a feint of lowering her voice,) “Mr. Shafto speaks so highly of Chaplin’s fidelity and honesty, in spite of the large fortune he is making under him and Sir Thomas Sykes, that I should be particularly glad to hear some time hence of one of his sons proposing for Miss O’Meara; but I must go and look after my own daughters;” and away glided the courtly and ghastly Mrs. Shafto, meaning at *that time* to make the most delightful impression of graceful manner and wonderful condescension upon the obscure girl at the Rectory. Honoria was still standing; every drop of her proud Irish blood in her face, and her heart throbbing, as if to break its way through her boddy. Never had she felt anger

—towering anger before : but this was the heart's anger ; the strongest, the most enduring of all.

When a naturally sweet disposition is made thoroughly indignant, the feeling is stronger, indeed, and more lasting than in persons of fiery temperament : bursts of violence being a sort of chimney, by which the dark vapours escape ; and where these are not, the vapours gather and blacken, till they fill the small tenement that lodges them.

As Mrs. Meredith turned round with a boasting exclamation of the great Lady's uncommon kindness and gratifying observations, (for Mrs. Meredith had her private views in consequence of such kindness and such praise,) Honoria putting up her lip with a scorn which became her youth ; " Miss O'Meara ! and hoping I will marry the son of her husband's steward !—O this big little heart !" laying her hand upon her hard-heaving side.

" Steward, indeed !" began Mrs. Meredith, but Honoria's tongue, for once, was too nimble for her. Exclaiming, " I *must* have a run after my good humour !" with the bound of a fawn, but a different sparkle in her imperious eyes, she jumped over a low window into a meadow behind the house ; and was soon on the other side of the river, and along the hills, as if " chasing the young roe."

The chase was successful ; she came back long before their early tea hour, with her hat stuck full of corn flowers, her hands full of grasses of various sorts, (and I know few bouquets more beautiful, except it be the first spring-leaves of plants,) and her features regilded by smiles. It must be owned, however, that resentment of the affront put upon her by Mrs. Shafto's condescension, and her daughter's insolence, was still at her heart : and determining to show these ladies how little she valued their notice, she never appeared afterwards, when they came to meet their Italian ; and stoutly refused going with Mrs. Meredith to view a dinner-service of very fine china, which the great Lady of the place *politely thought it just possible Mrs. Meredith might*

like to see, being made after the pattern of one ordered by H. R. H. the Duke of ——. The details of this visit disgusted Honorja more than ever; she found that the housekeeper of Shafto Place had not only done the honours of the china, but of the phantom of a luncheon, which was to indemnify Mrs. Meredith for her two o'clock dinner. Mrs. Shafto had friends staying in the house, so she was only able to glide in for five minutes, just to see, she said, that Mrs. Meredith was taken care of. Most condescendingly did she decline either eating or sitting down, moving about all the time, yet begging Mrs. Meredith to go on refreshing herself; in short, demonstrating, by every well-bred means in her power, that she did not consider her guest fit company for a person of her consequence.

This noble entertainment, given immediately upon the departure of Signor Vocallino from the North, was understood and meant to strike out, by one capital stroke, the Misses Shafto's debt for accommodation. But Mrs. Meredith managed so dexterously to show how willingly she would "sell her birthright for a mess of pottage," and how easily Mrs. Shafto might purchase the privilege of speaking of her with that sort of contumely with which those people are mentioned who are needy or mean-spirited enough to live upon petty favours,—that certain arrangements were entered into between these high contracting powers which virtually bound the one to supply the Rectory with dairy produce and billet-wood during the twelve calender months; and the other, to the practice of continual eulogiums on, and subserviency to, the Lady of the Place.

By this means, Mrs. Shafto so exactly defined the line of separation between them as acquaintances, that she hoped it would be impossible for any one to think of bringing forward any young woman connected with so low a person. Honor O'Hara, therefore, must fall back into that obscurity, from which she could perceive her appearance and manners were now bringing her. It would be of little avail to the innocent girl, that

she was herself well-born and well-bred, if she were always coupled in idea with her uncle's under-bred, servile-spirited wife. Mrs. Shafto, therefore, became ostentatiously punctual and particular in her useful presents. Mrs. Meredith having in this way achieved her point of securing a greater surplus of money from house-keeping for the purchase of furbelows, and quite contented with a lofty recognition every Sunday at church from the ladies of the Place, persisted in speaking of them every where with a fulsomeness of encomium, and an exaggeration of their high condition in society, truly humbling and disgusting to Honoria.

Not that Honoria was so unjust (even though bribed to some little failure of the kind, by her own near interest in the matter) as to think Mrs. Shafto ought to have visited Mrs. Meredith. She felt that her uncle's wife had not one claim to the notice of well-bred, well-educated persons in any station of life; she thought that not one even of her own breeding, could seek her society from any hope of pleasure in it. What, then, was to authorize her in expecting it from the lady of a Member of Parliament? She did not expect it—she could not wish it; and if Mrs. Shafto and her daughters had persevered in their former sweeping curtsy at church, or wherever else they might encounter her and her aunt, they would never have incurred her resentment. But she felt that there is an honest and a dishonest traffic in our civil intercourse with each other, as well as in our bargain and sale transactions; and that unless Mrs. Shafto had purposed receiving a service from the wife of Mr. Meredith, as the civility of one gentlewoman to another, she should not have put such an affront upon his respectable character and sacred function, as that of employing his wife like a menial, and rewarding her like one, with a condescending word, and the wages of a few pounds of butter.

The Shaftos and the Fitz Arthurs being distantly related, Honoria more than once stumbled upon them in her visits to Arthur's Court, just before its heir arrived; but she could be as mortifying as the Misses Shafto

themselves, when she thought a person deserved mortification at her hands : and at those times, a curtsy of well-bred distance, the calm look of perfect non-acquaintance succeeded, by all the charms of her own playful tones and countenance, as she turned with affectionate familiarity to the open-hearted Baronet ; these were her sharpest weapons, and they pierced in proportion to their polish.

At such times, the Misses Shafto pronounced her "impertinent," with half-shut lips ; their mother declaring in a low voice to Mrs. Fothergill, that "she was the most extraordinary young woman she had ever met with ! Such total ignorance of what was due to superiors, she could not have imagined in anything civilized ! she must deprecate the dreadful revolutionary principle so evidently spreading through all classes ! it became more and more the duty of every well-educated person of a certain condition in life, to keep down the inferior people ! it was unwise—really it was worse than unwise, (she feared she must say,) in their cousin Sir Everard to permit an under-born and under-bred girl like this Miss O'Hara (Mrs. Shafto never forgot a name when it was important to be accurate,) to address him with such saucy freedom. She really could not comprehend where the girl could have seen anything like that manner of hers, now *caressante*, now *moqueuse*, now *tendre*, with which she contrived to give herself the air of having lived with people of a certain set. At all events, it did not become her to assume such an air."

In fact, Mrs. Shafto might have added that she thought it was extremely impertinent in any obscure clergyman's niece to be prettier and more agreeable than the daughters of a man of 10,000*l.* a year.

The Misses Shafto themselves had discovered not only Honoria's glow of freshness and beauty, but the magical effect of her manner. They could have envied the flashings of that ever-varying diamond !—yet while watching its bright play, and wondering why they did not dazzle and delight like her, they were too

stupid to find out, that to shine (we must be solid : and that without a centre of good sense and good feeling, attempted sportiveness is but impertinence, wit ill-nature!)

Miss Shafto was just at the age when women who have been educated solely with a view to *establishing* themselves, are peculiarly apt to start at the very shadow of a new competitor for admiration. Miss Shafto was six and twenty : she was actually come to that age, which, when she was fifteen, nay, till she entered the precincts of twenty-one, she had always openly denounced as the period at which ended the youth of woman ; at which began the dreadful era of old-maidism. She often remembered, now, with more vexation than real remorse, how invariably she had blazoned the twenty-fifth birthday of every single woman in their neighbourhood : how many brilliant things had been said by herself, and by the *very agreeable men*, to whom she was thus displaying her lively talent and her *great good-nature*. Every biting sarcasm uttered by these *charming men*, upon young ladies *un peu passée* ; upon their dexterous choice of pink ribbons, instead of lilac and apple-green ; upon their exceedingly assiduous, and most particularly amiable endeavours to make the agreeable, &c.—all these enchanting pleasantries, were now as sweet to Miss Shafto's remembrance, as the caustic ink of a northern reviewer is to the luckless author whose work he is bespattering. She heard her own tauntings in every careless remark which hit the subject by chance. She believed the insult intentional ; and she never saw a group of *just-come-outs*, laughing together, that she did not suppose her singlehood the cause of their merriment. The only revenge she had in her power, was that of picking a quarrel with every match made in the county. Not a marriage took place which Miss Shafto did not benevolently bemoan : the bridegroom always had a fault ; he was so plain ! or so silly ! or so ill-mannered ! or he was a mere fortune-hunter ! or he was so much too old, or so much too young for the lady he made a wife ! in short,

it was as clear as noonday, that Miss Shafto would not have married him !

Still, however, intending to enter the happy state with some one, she saw the necessity of dressing exactly like her sisters of twenty and twenty-one, who *were out* ; and resolutely keeping back those of seventeen and eighteen, who were yet in the school-room. Mrs. Shafto was beginning to be seriously uneasy on the subject of her elder daughter's establishments : all her plans in their favour had failed. She had regularly paid court to the country gentlemen, till Miss Matilda, the youngest of the three, had been seen by them during two years. Nothing coming of it, she gave the country up as a losing game ; and immediately resolved upon making a great effort in London.

With the most meritorious wish of assisting their mother, the daughters had no talent for getting themselves off her hands : she saw this ; and knew, therefore, that the only chance of success was a large theatre like the capital, where well-dressed puppets may be skilfully played, and no one discover the moving wires or directing hand. Sisters dressed alike generally produce a good effect : at least they attract momentary attention. The Misses Shafto gowns, therefore, were always fac-similes. Unfortunately the wearers themselves were as alike in shape, complexion, and features ; so that there was some danger of their never being wooed except as a corporate body. Men talked of them in the lump, as those *nice-looking girls*, those *fashionable young women* ; but never individualized them. There was, however, a real difference between them ; and an eye as sharp as that of the practised shepherd, who knows every sheep's face in his flock, would have discovered at a glance, that Miss Shafto looked sullen and sarcastic ; Miss Augusta sharp and spiteful ; Miss Matilda purely stupid.

Miss Shafto's, barring its revolting expression, was the best face ; Miss Augusta's, saving its leanness, the best proportioned figure ; and Miss Matilda's, except for their unmeaningness, the best coloured eyes.

Of Miss Matilda's settlement in marriage, Mrs. Shafto secretly entertained the strongest hopes : she was blessedly stupid ; comfortably silent ; delightfully easy to shove about into any place, opinion, dress, liking, or unliking, her mother chose her to fill, adopt, wear, entertain, or dismiss. She had been twice in love already, by Mrs. Shafto's express desire.

Her first fire burnt for the youngest brother of Lord Wearmouth, a youth of eighteen, who came for six weeks' shooting on the moors at Ravenshaw. Their near neighbourhood, his youth, his solitude, the circumstance of this being his first escape from a tutor's house, the happy chances which somehow threw Miss Matilda daily in his way during his rambles, were all solid grounds of expectation : it is true, he would rarely give up his savage freedom, and dine like a civilized man at Shafto Place ; yet, it was hoped this very savage love of liberty, might induce him to prefer a wife of his own choosing, to one perhaps recommended hereafter by his elder brother.

Mrs. Shafto was always in preparation for her daughter's elopement. But Mr. Charles Barrington's heart was smit with a different passion ; he panted for glory : he sought and found both that and death at the same moment. He fell in Holland with a pair of colours in the hand Mrs. Shafto ever afterwards insinuated, had been plighted to her poor girl.

The young lady's second flame was for an old bachelor. But though she gave up dancing for cribbage ; and the study of botany for the art of cookery ; the ungrateful Sir John ended her courtship by his marriage with his house-keeper. With this mortifying disappointment had terminated Mrs. Shafto's plans upon the country ; her future plots had London for their theatre : though she did not neglect meanwhile, any noble game that might by chance be seen taking its flight across Northumberland.

Matters were in this state, with the family at the Place, when Captain Fitz Arthur arrived at Arthur's Court.

CHAPTER II.

For the first few weeks after his arrival Captain Fitz Arthur mixed little with the society round Edensfell; and when he did so, his extreme ill health, and occupied mind, (for his whole soul was intent upon getting his father out of his pecuniary difficulties,) made him no striking addition to a dinner table, no ornament to a tea-party; and certainly enabled him to perform very awkwardly, any part in those merry gipsyings (as they are termed,) which carry all the youthful population of rural neighbourhoods, on foot, in carriages, in caravans, to dance somewhere on the grass, (no matter where, so it be but from home,) or leaves them searching nuts or strawberries among the woods.

Captain Fitz Arthur had quitted the paternal roof at seventeen: after an absence of eight years, he returned to his home. Every thing belonging to that home was fresh in his memory, and dear to his heart; but many were gone that used to render it cheerful: and though he loved his father, he felt that there was much of Sir Everard's character which he must learn, ere he could contribute to the happiness of those dependent upon him.

The graves of his brother, of his little sisters, of his step-mother herself, were melancholy substitutes for the play fellow of his boyish years, for the kind woman who had treated him with maternal tenderness, and for the pretty innocents whom he had left smiling in their mother's arms. He passed the churchyard in which they lay, with a swelling heart, and gushing eyes; he was alone in the chaise (his servant having ridden forward to apprise the family;) and throwing himself back into the corner of it, after one earnest gaze over the low wall of the burying ground, he shed his unwitnessed tears in freedom.

The whole drive from Edenfell was fraught with softening associations. It cost him many a sigh; and after the first evening, Arthur's Court cost him many more.

Trees that had been the friends of his childhood; some old oaks that he revered as though they were all so many Adams and Abrahams, were vanished along with him that had played under their shade, and "their place would know them no more." One great avenue of elms was at that moment lying on the earth, like a routed army of giants: the young soldier passed between their regular lines, with a feeling something similar to that with which he moved over battle-fields, when their noise and strife were done. He looked to the right and left; trees of noble growth, in their very prime of age, were lying with all their green boughs and branches on them, as he had seen many a brave companion lie on the plains of India: he paused to moralize for a moment, over the fallen habitation of many a rook and raven, fallen with the tree they lodged in. At that instant the heavy sound of the woodman's axe was heard;—it was heard again, and again, and again; the next moment came the crash—the fall—the long echoing of the heavy boughs; another elm was fallen! Fitz Arthur hurried on.

He turned in another direction to a part of the demesne which bore the name of the abbey. It was a large grove of remarkably fine limes, planted by that very ancestor who suffered for assisting Charles Edward.—Its stately rows of double trees, with their high intermingling tops, and spreading branches below, bore a striking resemblance to the aisles of Gothic churches; and in moonlight nights, Delaval Fitz Arthur had often lingered there, when a boy, to hearken to the wind pealing among their high tops like the sound of an organ soaring along the arches of a cathedral. What was his delight to find this grove had been spared! yet certain marks on the principal trees proved them destined to the axe.

An ordinary heir might have felt indignation at this

threatened havoc with property which must eventually belong to himself ; and have felt inclined to question, if not its legality, its equity : but I must do Captain Fitz Arthur the justice to allow, that his generous heart was sensible only to a pang of sorrow for the necessities which had brought his father to this, and which he now feared, for the first time, were of unaccountable magnitude. At this moment, therefore, he took the resolution of inquiring, with all the respect and tenderness of a son, into the nature and extent of his father's incumbrances : he did so soon afterwards ; and he found them, as he feared, numerous, harassing, and painfully burthensome.

Sir Everard had gone on increasing his need of an enlarging income, by every year giving, or lending, or letting himself be robbed of large sums ; never altering his style of house-keeping, or the old family customs of keeping foxhounds and harriers ; driving six horses : giving annual dinners to clubs, corporations, tenants, and colliers ; doing all this, without either raising his rents by the usual summary process, or by the right and just one of bettering the lands from which they were to be produced. To pay his regular Christmas bills in the same good old fashion, became every year of course more difficult. So lands were mortgaged, woods cut down, lucrative fisheries and coal pits let on long leases at low rents, for the sake of a high premium laid down at the instant. Since the death of his last wife, Sir Everard's ruin had been rapid : she, like his first lady, had judiciously influenced his will, and restrained his profusely liberal disposition. Mrs. Fothergill had neither the right, the ability, nor the privilege of doing more than superintending his house : she managed her limited department according to the most approved rules of handsome house-keeping ; and Sir Everard always giving her the money necessary for every day's expenditure, afforded her no reason for interfering with his other disbursements.

Left alone, therefore, with his own thoughtless kindness of heart, and indifferent quality of head, the well-

meaning Baronet found himself at last unable to raise the five thousand pounds required to pay the collector's forfeited fine, unless he submitted to the most degrading imposition from a money-lender. He, therefore, took the spirited resolution of cutting down timber to twice the amount permitted him every ten years by the laws of the estate; providing against the probable contingency of his death before the return of the second ten years, by encumbering a small property in Cumberland, (meant for his invalid son Hylton,) with the acquittal of the debt thus contracted to his heir.

This expedient, together with the inadequate, yet grievous and amiable sacrifice of all his own personal luxuries; such as an old Swiss valet, a stud of beautiful hunters, the six state coach-horses, his annual visit to Scarborough, an aviary of curious birds, and a most expensive correspondence with Messrs. Root and Branch, the florists near London;—these were all poor Sir Everard's modes of redeeming large estates, and restoring family dignity.

Captain Fitz Arthur read his father's character quickly; he loved its goodness, honoured the integrity of his purposes, and pitied without reprobating the lamentable weakness of his disposition. He foresaw, that in this very easiness of nature, he should find a sure means of working the desired reformation in his habits; and satisfied of this, he had more spirits to study the mystery of Sir Everard's extreme embarrassment.

Fitz Arthur suspected roguery or scandalous neglect somewhere, in addition to the Baronet's profusion; and he found it in the conduct of a steward appointed on the death of their former faithful one.

This man was not wilfully dishonest, but he was virtually so, by neglecting his master's rights, receiving a great salary for doing little, and gaining popularity by a pompous display of influence over his employer. Thus he was always able to appear in the high character of a patron among the tenantry and work-people, by obtaining for them all the unreasonable demands or reductions they chose to clamour for.

Captain Fitz Arthur's first act of delegated power was to discharge this steward. His next to commence an immediate reformation in the expenditure at Arthur's Court.

In one capital article Captain Fitz Arthur differed from most reformists ; he applied himself solely to the practicable, and he struck first and hardest at the giants of the forest. He cashiered at once, all the useless, impertinent, drunken hangers-on of the kennel and stables ; and not only advertised the gentlemen of the Fitz Arthur hunt, that there would be no more hunting under that title, but advertised the hounds themselves for sale.

Of course, a pack of enemies, as clamorous and more furious than the dogs they lamented, were instantly full cry after his good name. Fitz Arthur went on, as though he heard them not. The kennel and the stables emptied of expensive tenants, Fitz Arthur saw himself enabled to re-instate four of the six coach horses, and to restore the Swiss valet. The first were dear to his father's heart rather than his pride ; the Baronet almost identifying such state with the memory of his father : the other was necessary to his comfort, for Wilhelm had served his master thirty years, and had originally won his claim to preference over every later servant, by nursing Sir Everard abroad through a contagious fever of peculiar malignity. Sir Everard had dismissed him upon a pension, because he thought the appearance of a valet, was wrong in one under embarrassed circumstances.

With the concurrence of Mrs. Fothergill, our anxious reformist curtailed the number of courses and dishes at the family table ; but he suffered the great baskets of cut bread, and the deep flagons of home-brewed, to stand as usual in the porch of the servants' entrance, for wayfarers and errand carriers. The huge yule clogs at Christmas in the servants' hall and kitchen were laid on with yet greater plenty : meat, coals, and blankets were as bounteously bestowed as ever upon the aged poor. Not a single labourer was discharged, nor any one's wages lowered.—Yet, with

all this humane consideration, Captain Fitz Arthur could not escape obloquy.

For some time his name was another title for a degenerate, mean-spirited, penurious fellow, whom all the county ought to unite against and send to Coventry. Four or five roguish servants, quickly dismissed by him, and one or two cheating colliery agents threatened with public disgrace, joined their under-breath voices to the more open-mouthed set of jovial middle-aged and spendthrift young men, who were accustomed to live at free quarters upon Sir Everard, by favour of their privilege, as members of his hunt.

For awhile, therefore, the *vox populi* was all against poor Delaval: but by degrees its murmurs died away, and were finally lost in a risingswell of honest recantation, and warm esteem.

The poorer order found the heir of Arthur's Court considerate and helpful to them; the middling class found him liberal, just, and exact; the rich and the worthless alone saw him regardless of their peculiar accommodation. Yet Christianly courteous to all, by degrees his social character rose with his moral one, into estimation. Having removed a heavy load from his father, by the sacrifice of his own immediate advantage, Delaval's health gradually returned with the ease of his spirit; and the animating, amiable disposition of the boy, so kindly remembered at Edensfell, was again recognised in the war-practised soldier.

A vein of pleasantry, not amounting to wit or humour, nor ever debased by ridicule, enabled him to give life to the every-day topics of every-day society, without exciting envy or creating offence. He amused without alarming; and pleased every one, more than they were conscious of at the time, because he sincerely wished to see every one pleased.

The genteel inhabitants immediately in and about Edensfell, principally consisted of persons who knew no more of the world than was to be learned from a few books, and a little conversation within the limits of their own circle: simple, worthy, housewifely women;

and men, without that enlargement of mind, and those refinements of taste which are insensibly acquired by the most moderate capacities, when favoured by liberal intercourse with mankind. The attempt at interesting such persons in abstract speculations or graceful discussions of "the vast, the wonderful, the wild," would have been folly : the individual who had attempted it might have delivered an oration, but he could not reasonably have expected any interchange of ideas. Captain Fitz Arthur benevolently stooping to their level, contentedly left them to imagine him not a whit wiser than themselves. His best acquirements and his peculiar sentiments he reserved for the few that would take the trouble to dive for them ; or for those whose talents and sentiments unconsciously elicited his. Content with being beloved, he never dreamt of making himself admired.

Beyond the first two miles round Edenfell he found society better suited to his former habits. His high character as a gentleman and a soldier gave him the *entrée* of all the first houses in the county ; so that whenever he chose to refresh his mind with more polished manners and more intellectual conversation than were to be found in his native village, he was certain of enjoying them at —— Castle, or at the Dean of ——'s, &c.

In his intercourse with the gentler sex, Captain Fitz Arthur was too open and honourable, and observing, to make the obvious conquest of any woman except of her whom he might wish to inspire with a reciprocal attachment. There were few unattached women within the round of his Indian or English connexions, who, after six months' familiar acquaintance, would have refused Captain Fitz Arthur's hand, or denied their whole heart to him, had he previously given them his : yet not one beauty was known to have died for him ; nor was it whispered about that any such individual was in a fair way of doing so. This, simply, because he was above the criminal weak.

ness of gratifying vanity at the price of a virtuous woman's peace.

To some sort of men their virtues are sanctified and holy traitors. Even so it was with Captain Fitz Arthur. This honourable conduct towards a sex which had particular attractions for one of his domestic and fondly-inclined disposition, did him disservice with the only one he wished seriously to interest. Honor O'Hara (who I warned my readers would make sure work with his affections) was at the age of believing in first-sight love; and her earliest studies having taught her that it was impossible for a man to merit one woman's heart who had not previously broken the hearts (though quite unintentionally) of half a score others; and having never heard even the rumour of such a fatality pursuing Captain Fitz Arthur, had long ago put him *hors de combat* from the field of rivalry for her favour. She had, besides, so completely settled him as a *fright*, from his picture, and his first appearance under the fangs of a jaundice, that although he became, in the course of five months after his return, quite well, and almost handsome, she persisted in thinking and speaking of him as merely gentleman-like.

To his generous spirit, clear judgment, steady principles, and tenderness of nature (after a while) she did ample justice; yet almost unknown to herself: for though gradual acquaintance with these qualities in him, gave his opinions a weight with her, his approbation a value, and his disapproval an awfulness, which caused her just as much solicitude for his regard as was more than sufficient to secure for herself the stronger exclusive sentiment, of which he soon began to feel the force and the supremacy, unluckily she was revolted by the first character she heard given of him, before he allowed himself time to mix with the general neighbourhood. In spite of her better sense she was affected by the repetitions of sundry meddling, self-seeking mischief-makers, who went from house to house enumerating the changes made at Arthur's Court by the heir; and representing each as affected against the inward wish of its half-de-

posed master. So piteous were these lamentations over the worthy Baronet's privations, that for a short time Honoria looked upon Sir Everard as another King Lear, with one monstrous child instead of two. Happy circumstances, however, first weakened, and then triumphed over this cruel calumny.

Honoria had been in the habit of going often to Arthurs' Court, ostensibly to visit Mrs. Fothergill, but in reality to delight Sir Everard and his invalid son with her cheerfulness. She ceased to do this so frequently when once a formidable Captain of Dragoons was added to the small party. Yet dinner invitations were given to, and accepted by Mr. and Mrs. Meredith, and their niece, of course, accompanied them.

There, while Sir Everard was discussing politics of church or county with Mr. Meredith, and the latter's guarded better half was enacting the civil and soft-speaking to the rarely speaking Mrs. Fothergill, Honoria would sit by the invalid Hylton, devoting herself to entertain, to help, to listen to him; while Captain Fitz Arthur dividing his obvious attentions equally among all, was unconsciously marking his thought's incessant occupation about one alone, by always fancying Miss O'Hara spoke, or Miss O'Hara was spoken of, or Miss O'Hara was needing something, whenever any thing was said, or referred to, or required by another.

In one of those corner conversations with Hylton, Honoria heard, with pleased surprise, though as a profound secret, that one of Captain Fitz Arthur's first acts on his return, had been to procure the advice of a medical man, celebrated for his knowledge of such complaints as had followed Hylton's early accident; and that in consequence of his advice, the patient boy was already sensible of a material improvement in his general health.

"I know it must have cost dear Delaval a great deal of money," whispered Hylton, "for Dr. C—— was obliged to come from Edinburgh to see me; and though he staid only six hours, there was all the expenses of his travelling, and his great, great fee beside. You

know he must have lost so many smaller fees, that Delaval must have given him fifty, or perhaps a hundred guineas to make it up : he only joked when I asked him what he gave, and said I had no business to inquire what he paid for the present he chose to make me on my birth-day, for it was my birth-day ; so he put one of the prescriptions into my hand, and kissed me, and bid God bless me, and ran away. Do you know Miss O'Hara, I saw he was just as ready to cry as I was."

"Well, it was very good, and very right, and what he ought to do!" Honoria observed, pleased, without astonishment, "every good brother would have done the same ; don't actually deify yours, my sweet Hyllly." "Oh, but there is no brother half so good and kind as mine," resumed her young companion. "Delaval is so noble upon proper occasions ! He'll give his last farthing to any one in want, though he won't allow any body to waste money, or to cheat him and papa. For a person he loves, I do believe he'd sell himself to do them good."

The emotion with which the grateful boy spoke, prevented his proceeding with more proofs of his elder brother's true liberality ; but Honoria had heard enough to convince her that Captain Fitz Arthur deserved a very different character from what current report gave him just then : and Mrs. Preston's warm commendations upon every part of his conduct, completed her conviction of his worth.

In his boyish days, Captain Fitz Arthur had been one of the happiest of the juvenile set who used to play blind-man's-buff, and eat mince pies at Hazeldean ; he loved Mrs. Preston when he was a boy for he knew not what ; now, that he had traversed half the world, he could give ample reasons for his continued affection towards this amiable woman.

It was that simplicity without simpleness ; that admiration of excellence without envy or discontent ; that freshness of every benevolent opinion, and that unwearied practice of every friendly office, which, at sixty, proclaimed the heart to be still sixteen. It was

this happy nature, which being originally placed in the situation best fitted for its growth, and sheltered afterward by a gracious Providence from every event which might either shake or sully it, was green and gladsome to the sight, bounteous of good to the soul. Such a character, seemingly of humble claims to notice, was rare, however; and could not be appreciated until a person had made a much longer tour among their fellow creatures than any one at Edenfell had done, Captain Fitz Arthur excepted.

Immediately after his return, Captain Fitz Arthur found his way almost daily to Hazeldan; where he used to have pleasure in talking over old times with Mrs. Preston, telling her little histories of India and military life, and acquiring from her rational remarks, or kindly confidences, the means of serving her or others.

There of course he met our heroine not unfrequently, (for she was always Mrs. Preston's guest when her daughters were absent together,) and he was as ready as herself to stroll with the notable mistress of the little mansion, to her out fields and farm, or to read aloud while she and Honoria worked. There was another haunt, too, of Miss O'Hara's, where he delicately took care not to meet her, but where he often followed her steps.

It was to a decent little room in Edenfell, inhabited by a bed-ridden old woman who had been the village school-mistress for thirty years, and many a promising scion, and stately tree, had grown and flourished under the salutary shade of her primeval birch.

Hedworth and Delaval Fitz Arthur had been her scholars when in petticoats. Delaval remembered the childish eagerness with which he had ever mounted the servant's back appointed to carry him to and fro for Dame Wilson's instructions, and the many sugar plums her sovereign hand had bestowed upon his diligent scholarship. Reverentially conscious of owing his knowledge of the first six letters of the alphabet to her solemn admixture of sternness and graciousness,

he deemed attention to her helpless, purblind old age, an absolute duty.

Fitz Arthur had a melancholy pleasure, also, in talking with her of his brother, whom he never mentioned before Sir Everard. Dame Wilson loved poor Hedworth's memory, (he had been her favourite by favour of a face like a peach,) and it eased her heart to be thus privileged in telling over the stories of his childhood, to one who had shared the petty pains and perils of this darling pupil.

At these times a tear often stole silently down Fitz Arthur's cheek while the sweet endearments of the period Dame Wilson was describing, and the more joyous companionship of boyhood, came over him in a flood of remembrances. When his heart was thus softened he would listen with peculiar delight to the praises of Miss O'Hara, incidentally spread through the poor spinster's narrative ; and he often returned home, musing less upon the buried brother, than upon the pious hand which he was told had long taken care to keep weeds from growing round the tomb which covered the remains of Dame Wilson's favourite scholar.

In his various ramblings among rich and poor, Fitz Arthur could not but observe that no one was so generally beloved as Miss O'Hara ; every body had their own name of endearment for her : with his father who loved the innocent excitement of flowers, she was "his nosegay," with her uncle "my kitten," with Dame Wilson "that lamb," with Hetty Macready her "jewel," with all the cotters "the good, dear, young lady." Such epithets speak volumes !

Honoria, indeed, could be amiable in so many ways, that there was scarcely a person existing, however oddly constructed, whom her widely-ranging character could not find a harmony for. Fitz Arthur saw this immediately, and found in his turn, her note of unison with him.

This he found in the uncommon openness, without indiscretion, of her character and conversation. Such

frankness is rare in women, who are generally either timidly reserved, or impetuously unguarded: it argues a loyal heart, and a strong mind; and is, therefore, to be received as the herald of a spirit capable of being moved to noble purposes.

Fitz Arthur, though he did not much frequent the rectory, from that *tact* which made him feel that Honoria was never her happy self in Mrs. Meredith's company, sought her everywhere else with evident avidity; gradually giving her so much of his noiseless attention, and being so continually at the command of all her wishes, that Honoria felt, without reflecting on it, nay, before she was aware, that her power over him in every way was absolute.

Yet, with all this, Honoria remained cruelly indifferent to Captain Fitz Arthur. Given up to a prejudiced imagination, and always, therefore, in pursuit of something better than what she saw daily, she was naturally attracted to every unknown person. In each new acquaintance, whether to be made at a country ball or a private pleasure party, she hoped to find that *rara avis* of her studies and her dreams, a perfect character in a perfect form: but, as this perfect character united qualities which never have been united in mere mortal, she pursued it in vain.

Judging by the bias of her own heart, Honoria thought those virtues the easiest to practise, which are in truth the hardest; those the commonest, which are in truth the rarest. Thus when she heard her uncle mention instances of peculiar tenderness to the wayfarer, the aged, the penitent outcast, which he discovered to have proceeded from Delaval Fitz Arthur; when she was shown some striking proof of his generous sacrifice for the sake of his half-brothers; when she saw him yielding up his own refined and studious habits with unabating cheerfulness to accommodate himself to the less improving and more jovial ones of his father; when she witnessed the serene kindness with which he bore the mixed insolence and mischief of his youngest brother during his long holydays—all

seemed to her but matters of course ; and some fantastic sort of excellence which she would have found it difficult to have described, still fitted before her fancy, forming the desideratum of her expectations.

Honorina was yet ignorant of the world, and had to learn from stern experience how little of their first brightness, even characters the most carefully moulded by pious hands, retain after mingling with that world. She had yet to learn that in the breast of a truly good Christian lies the well-spring of every heroic action, every sublime sacrifice ; that the value of our virtuous deeds depends not on the size of the theatre upon which they are acted, nor on the number of spectators by whom they are applauded ; not, even, upon the occasions by which they are called forth.

It may cost one man as much to give up the prospect of domestic happiness, as it would do another to resign a kingdom : yet no one perhaps knows of the one, and the whole world rings with acclaim of the other. At the period of Delaval Fitz Arthur's first acquaintance with Miss O'Hara, she was barely seventeen ; and she appeared to him then as full of fascination and fault, sense and silliness, as most young ladies of that age, who have been principally left to chance for the formation of their ideas upon life and character. But he soon discerned that the laughing girl had some admirable qualities to balance her defects ; a certain high-mindedness and sturdiness of principle accompanied her pliant sociability and fond attachments : she had, moreover, a mine of sterling good sense, (imperfectly worked, indeed, because lying deeper than ordinary observers look for,) but it was a mine and a rich one.

He often observed, that Miss O'Hara reflected more, and more to the purpose, in five minutes, than many folks of sager reputations would have done in five hours. The beautiful nonsense she sometimes talked before him of ineffaceable impressions, faultless excellence, twin souls, cold calculations, sordid care of self, &c. &c. made him smile at its absurdity ; sometimes gently condemn her for misapplying terms ; oftener sigh

at his own weakness in admiring the looks, voice, and enthusiasm of the mistaken reasoner.

He was, however, not without the gratification of hearing, now and then, through Mrs. Preston, of good effects produced by some casual remark of his, or by some observation of Honoria's own quickly-applying mind, upon actions of his performing. The general tone of his conversation had induced her to extend her circle of books; she read more, and better works: his example, too, made her ashamed of running about and enjoying herself out of the Parsonage, while her indulgent uncle remained within it, a prey to solitude,—or to his wife.

Fitz Arthur, therefore, met her less frequently than formerly, in her tree-bower, or on the hills; but he heard of her reading with, and writing for her uncle; and he oftener met her beguiling Mr. Meredith from his long cheerless rambles, into pleasanter walks with herself, conducting to the resting place of some favourite neighbour's house.

These were lovely proofs of a lovely temper; a heart so open to conviction, so prompt in acting upon that conviction, was surely rare! The gem was not the less valuable, because some of its native earth yet clung to it. All that rubbish of false notions, extravagant sentiments, and national pride, which a neglected education had left to accumulate over, and keep down her own natural sense, he thought might easily be cleared away by an affectionate hand, if that hand were loved and privileged. And at first, wishing only that he were her relation, and then trying to establish himself her friend, he watched, and hinted, and instructed, till he loved her dearer than his life.

At this point Fitz Arthur started, paused, and looked round him. His father's imprudent liberalities and credulous kindness had burthened the family estate with annuities and mortgages, which it would require some years of rigid economy to get rid of: besides which, the settlements made upon Sir Everard's first wife and her children, tying him up from providing sufficiently for a

second family, his heir believed himself bound in conscience to give both his young brothers fortunes, when it should please heaven to deprive them of their only parent. Meanwhile the education of both, and the suffering health of the elder, would require large sums annually.

Fitz Arthur had given up every thing of his own, independent of his pay, to preserve the old mansion still for the family, in something of its ancient dignity; yet, even so, there was some secret drain for ready money, which he durst not, would not inquire into, but which caused him many an uneasy hour; and made him fear that his poor father's self-incurred misfortunes were not all over. Miss O'Hara, he well knew, had not two thousand pounds in the world!

Shocking as it must appear to all lovers under twenty, Captain Fitz Arthur, after pondering on these facts, till he was near relapsing into the sallow invalid again, at length came to the magnanimous resolution of thinking no more of Miss O'Hara as a wife. It is needless to say how manfully he maintained this resolution—*every now and then*—when certain indications of utter unobservance of his feelings, in the charming Honoria, or of her eager interest of some new-comer, reminded him that she had not yet seen the man with whom she desired to pass her life. The next day, perhaps, a certain bright humidness on Miss O'Hara's eyes, when they met, and she remarked he looked ill, or an accent of tender concern while she feared he was fretting about his poor brother Hylton, made passion rush on him again, like an armed man; feelingly convincing poor Delaval, that

“He who would stay the sea with sadn;
Or fetter flame with flaxen band,
Hath yet a harder task to prove,
By strong resolve to conquer love.”

In the main, however, Captain Fitz Arthur kept his engagement with himself; and if he were one day too tender he was the next too stiff. Honoria rallied him on such ague-like friendship, as she called his, with no

hot and cold fits ; and blest Heaven for having given her a heart that always kept itself warm, and was ready for a friend to warm their hands at, whenever they chose.

At such moments the lover was on the point of convincing her how ill he deserved her gay reproach ; but happily, Honoria's little jest uttered, she glided or bounded away, as the humour of the moment prompted.

CHAPTER III.

SIR Everard Fitz Arthur had been accustomed to keep his own birthday ever since he could remember one ; and its sixtieth anniversary happening ten months after his son Delaval's return, he proposed commemorating both events, by a dinner in honour of the one, and a ball for the other.

Captain Fitz Arthur's system of economy did not exclude a moderate extra expenditure upon particular occasions : his father's birthday was one of these. Sir Everard's proposal was cordially assented to. Preparations for a dinner and a dance were immediately commenced, in their old fashion of profuse hospitality for poor and rich ; heightened in elegance, and I fear it must be owned in expense, by the suggestions of our travelled soldier's improved taste.

Here, perhaps, Captain Fitz Arthur may be blamed, as departing from his character and foregone purpose. But Fitz Arthur is not described as perfect : he had his weaknesses like other men. It is true, he was never to be awed from right conduct by fear, nor won to give up a principle from flattery : but no one could so little resist the pleadings of affection or of pity in his own breast : and what a beloved person appeared to wish, provided it was not actually criminal, he could not help striving to obtain for them, though at some risk of here-

after inconveniencing themselves, as well as of materially injuring his own comforts.

This indulgent nature he inherited from the Fitz Arthur blood: from his mother's he derived that sound judgment and unbending rectitude, which kept this yielding inclination from stooping too low.

The first Lady Fitz Arthur was a portionless daughter of one of the best houses in Scotland. She came to Arthur's Court with the noble spirit of high blood, coupled to the self-denying habits of honourable poverty: and she bequeathed to her children Scottish sense, Scottish principle, and Scottish "attachment to kith and kind."

The second son was too young when she died to have profited much by her example; but he remembered the maternal sweetness which had beautified the inflexibility of her will; and her memory equally beloved and revered by all their dependants, influenced him in after life, with beneficial effect.

No sooner were the Baronet's cards of invitation sent out, than Mrs. Shafto manœuvred to get herself solicited to become Lady Patroness: with the double view of showing her consequence, and excluding the vulgar herd. Unluckily, there was an efficient mistress at Arthur's Court, in the person of Mrs. Fothergill; and the ladies of Shafto Place were therefore reduced to the humbler characters of guests.

The dinner, though at a table running the whole length of the state dining-room, (as the larger eating-hall was still called,) was said to be given only to Sir Everard's most intimate and nearest neighbours. What was then the horror of Mrs. and the Misses Shafto to behold "stupid Mr. Meredith," "vulgar Mrs. Meredith," and "the impertinent Miss O'Hara," seated at the same board with themselves.

Mrs. Shafto had with much difficulty made up her mind to the mortification of seeing them among the mixed company, whom every one expected would come from the four quarters of the county to dance, and then lay waste a standing supper. But to be planted

beside these *nobodies*, rooted at an everlasting dinner, to be obliged to *act the civil*, and *make the agreeable*, to such people!—this was almost beyond even the power of religion. Of religion, however, Mrs. Shafto had exactly so much as enabled her to whisper with great suavity and unction to her more rebellious daughters, that Mr. Meredith was in the church, and she feared it might be wrong not to endeavour, it might be proper, perhaps, to take Christian “notice of his wife and niece.” The young ladies pouted and sat down.

Miss O'Hara was unfortunately seated directly opposite to Mrs. Shafto, with a tall, stooping, *handsomish* dragoon officer on her right, and a sturdy old squire (cut after the pattern of his own clipped hollies) on her left: just far enough removed from Captain Fitz Arthur, to keep all his senses uneasily upon the stretch, to see what Miss O'Hara was doing, to hear what she was saying, to guess what she was wanting; to fear, in short, that she was too much pleased with one of her next neighbours at least.

It may be supposed that poor Captain Fitz Arthur failed in doing the honours of his father's table. He was frequently absent; gave wrong answers to various challenges for drinking wine; forgot to drink the wine when it was poured out; and twice sent a plate of roast beef to Major Stanhope, after the gallant officer had declared himself engaged in an unsuccessful assault upon a portion already sent from the same bountiful hand.

Many happy applications of military terms, and as many ludicrous comparisons of his heaped plate to a besieged town, were made by the young officer, and made with a careless good-humour which disarmed criticism. He was prettily endowed with that talent of saying lively nothings, so often accepted for genuine humour, when good spirits, good looks, and above all, a handsome uniform sets it off. The Major, therefore, followed up his pleasantry, by assuring Miss O'Hara in an audible whisper, that Fitz Arthur certainly meant to stock him for a siege; adding such a string of amusing absurdities about the sort of beleaguering he had to

dread, and the forces that were likely to sit down before him, that Honoria's brilliant dark eyes laughed through their glittering fringes, till they blinded themselves and others.

Captain Fitz Arthur witnessed this mirth; he had caught the whisper; there was nothing offensive either in the meaning, or the manner of it: nothing could be more harmless or natural than the mirth of both; yet he burnt all over with a mingled sensation of resentment and confusion.

The feeling causing this sensation was momentary; it was but the infirmity of jealous love, fearfully apprehensive of being ridiculous in the eyes of her whom he wished to inspire with far different sentiments; and such a heart as Delaval Fitz Arthur's threw it off with instant self-reproach.

This little incident did him the service of restoring him to himself: he saw the necessity of watching his own conduct rather than that of others, (our best way, indeed, through life itself,) and suddenly rousing, he began a gay and graceful attack upon the Major, which produced infinite amusement to all within hearing.

The impulse of hilarity given by him who did the principal honours of the feast, gayety became the order of the day. Gentlemen who could not say brilliant things, paid compliments; ladies who could not answer with a prettiness or a pleasantry, could smile, bow, laugh, blush, &c. Thus the whole company did more than eat.

A gay clamour at table is particularly favourable to flirtations: young ladies previously held in awe by the consciousness of having some envious eves-dropper at their elbow, then venture to return a compliment, or drop an encouraging question; and it is therefore at such moments wary chaperons are especially upon the alert.

Mrs. Shafto's mode of chaperoning was capital: she watched,—not her own daughters, but those of other people; by which means she acquired a knowledge of all the schemes carrying on in the county among the

young ladies ; she found out what plans in her own family were likely to succeed or prove abortive. On the present occasion, Mrs. Shafto affecting to be most politely engaged in breathing insipid civilities in a studied voice into the ear of a venerable church dignitary, who heard the tones without attending to the words, was keenly observing her opposite neighbour : amazing herself at the ease, the playfulness, the infantine light-heartedness of Honoria, coupled with what she termed a *retenue* of manner that was absolutely provoking.

Mrs. Shafto could not help observing, that Miss O'Hara seemed to know the exact moment, when it was time to check a vivacity in herself, which might lead to the appearance of too sudden an intimacy with a stranger of the opposite sex. At the first familiar tone of Major Stanhope, before his spirits could run him into a single careless expression, Honoria changed her look ; and with a transition, quick and irresistible as lightning, turned the sportive skirmishing of her wit and the Major's into quiet though interesting remarks upon the admirable paintings which surrounded the dining-hall.

This change was effected with such resolute steadiness and bravery, though her heightened colour, and something of embarrassment in her eyes told that it cost something to her modest youth, to resist her companion's efforts at bringing back their former sportive tone, that even Mrs. Shafto could not help thinking, at first, that it was dignified. Delaval Fitz Arthur, who observed it too, felt it delightful.

Upon second thoughts, neither of these observers were quite as much gratified. Mrs. Shafto finally settled, that this maidenly delicacy was a piece of acting in Miss O'Hara, who had evidently a great deal more in her than most people suspected ; that she was a thorough-paced, designing, artful girl, ready to take in the first young man of good connexions that came in her way ; that she was awfully handsome, and as such, like "the beastly Corsican fiend," "to-be-never-a-bit-the-less-on-that-account-universally-detested-and-avoided."

Captain Fitz Arthur despondingly admitted to himself, that there was more danger in seriousness and sentiment with a pleasing companion, than in common rattling, or even in dazzling wit ; and every time he looked at Major Stanhope, the more formidably good-looking he thought him. Major Stanhope, in short, became the stationary object of his thoughts during the greatest part of this memorable evening ; so that he was perpetually calling upon the officer for assistance in his various duties at table, and in the entertaining-rooms.

"I wish to my soul you would find another aid-de-camp !" half whispered the half-enamoured Major, half-angrily, when he started up, for the fifth time, at a summons from Captain Fitz Arthur. "This confounded sixteenth call of yours has lost me my standing-place beside Miss O'Hara,—by and by I must get you to tell me who she is."

"May I do myself the pleasure of becoming your informant?" asked the courteous Mrs. Shafto, with an apologizing look for having listened, and such a flattering air of interest, that although the young soldier reddened till face and coat were of one colour, he stammered out something between a sillyish laugh and a "thank you !" taking the seat she winningly made for him on the sofa.

Major Stanhope, I must apprise my readers, was known to Mrs. Shafto as the younger son of a new lord with an old estate. He was nearly related to the first military character of that period ; and Major Stanhope, therefore, with such advantages, was not unworthy the notice of any commoner's daughter. A how-d'-you-do acquaintance in London privileged Mrs. Shafto in the country of doing the honours of her neighbourhood ; and she hastened now to enter upon her office.

"It is so very agreeable," the lady resumed, "to find one's own opinion the opinion of another, especially if we are inclined to like the person, that I really could not help stealing in thus upon your conversation about that very pretty girl. I admire herself so much, and

so much compassionate her misfortune in being connected as she is. No wonder you asked who she is, since she has *l'air du monde* at an age when other girls are blushing and hiding behind their mammas. How she has acquired this wonderful self-possession nobody can imagine ; it must have been born with her, as we hear it is in people upon the stage ; for she is actually niece to that little over-dressed, vulgar, fussy woman, drinking such quantities of negus."

"And who is that little woman?" awkwardly asked Major Stanhope, designedly dropping every epithet except the harmless one.

"Our village clergyman's wife," was the reply, "a farmer's daughter. The pretty girl is an orphan, wholly dependent upon these people. Her father was some Irish ensign or lieutenant in a marching regiment. The foot, I believe, Major Stanhope—"

"Are often much better soldiers than we cavalry fellows!" exclaimed Stanhope, with genuine sincerity, and an honest simplicity, which showed that he was not at all conscious of the lady's meaning.

"Is it so?" was the lady's rejoinder, uttered with the air of being pleased at the removal of her own prejudice. "I am really obliged to you for setting me right. I shall respect infantry officers from this moment ; but what must I think of the person whose candour did them justice, and waived the admitted superiority of his own line of service?"

Stanhope's sillyish laugh helped him out again : it always stood his friend when his modesty was overpowered ; and like many injudicious friends, did him more harm than good. He had nothing silly-seeming about him, except this laugh : though after its first short burst, Mrs. Shafto set him down for a good-natured foolish young man, exactly suited for one of her Shades ; and she destined him instantly for whichever of the three she might, after a little reflection, deem best fitted to help off the others.

"Major Stanhope must excuse me, if I take the privilege of a certain age," resumed Mrs. Shafto insi-

nuatingly, "and frankly tell him, I *must* bring him and Mr. Shafto acquainted. I am old fashioned enough to be pleased with something more in a young man than a fine person and an elegant address. (Mrs. Shafto's flattery-trowel was now elevated with no shrinking hand: poor Stanhope caught up a half-made bow, with one of his laughs.) "Your liberal sentiments are very rare. I suspect there is a little romance too, under that very becoming uniform. Romance is only too engaging in a young man." (The trowel was laid on unsparingly, and the laugh increased.) "I shall never hear from you, I am sure, those shocking questions about a young lady's family, fortune, and connexions, which are so right in papas and mammas, and so unnatural in sons and daughters. I am so interested in this pretty Miss O'Hara, and so anxious to see her taken out of the VERY under set she lives in, that I fear I almost wish to talk some unexceptionable man into doing a foolish thing. You won't wonder at my foolish zeal, perhaps, when I tell you, they talk of marrying her to a son of Mr. Shafto's steward. It will be dreadfully awkward, after having met her in society here! But luckily one has seen her nowhere else; except at their own parsonage."

"A steward's son!" repeated Major Stanhope, all scarlet again: even more scarlet than his coat. It must be confesed there was less of love than of alarmed pride in the suffusion. Miss O'Hara was well nigh done for.

"They do, indeed, say so!" Mrs. Shafto added, with a most prepossessing sigh. "Every body must wish to prevent such a sacrifice, she is so pretty! yet otherwise young Chaplin would be a very suitable match for her; exactly in her own line. I am looking about for Mr. Shafto, that I may have the gratification of making you and him acquainted. You must allow me to present Mr. Shafto. He will find ways and means, I hope, of bringing you again into Miss O'Hara's company."

"Me! O, positively not on Miss O'Hara's account! I just asked about her, because I sat next her at dinner,

and we got on together famously: but I—, really I—.” The confused Major stammered these 'disjointed sentences with the sensation of being wasp-stung. Mrs. Shafto smiled benignly; and by way of relieving his distress, as she had done his heart of all inclination to fall in love with Honoria, called his attention to a beautiful young woman in white satin, who was visible through the folding doors, as she approached them from the outer room.

“What a very fine young woman!” exclaimed Mrs. Shafto. “She is with Lady Henderson I see: what an *air distingué*! how feminine that downcast look! how very lady-like that almost pale complexion! certainly exuberant health and spirits is a *little* vulgar! my dark beauty must keep out of her way if she means to retain her conquests. I protest that young lady seems as if she were made of alabaster! every body looks quite black beside her! does she please you, Major Stanhope?”

The Major was fair and blue-eyed himself, so of course he admired exactly the reverse; but he could not refuse a deserved tribute of admiration to the delicate loveliness of her he was called upon to admire.

“I felt sure you would be taken with that look of high-breeding,” resumed Mrs. Shafto. “Lord Chesterfield used to say (by the way, I daresay I am talking with one of that immortal Peer’s race?) that blood was worth all the beauty in the world. I certainly agree with him; that is, in thinking no beauty of skin or feature can make up for the want of an air of birth and fashion. O, here is Mr. Shafto.”

Stanhope started up. “I—, I— shall be very happy to make Mr. Shafto’s acquaintance; but, indeed, positively—”

“My dear Sir,” soothingly exclaimed his wily companion, laying her hand upon his arm; “pray don’t give a serious turn to my nonsense of the moment. I want to present you and Mr. Shafto to each other, because I am trying to amass a little treasure of safe and improving acquaintance for my son when he goes

into the world. Mrs. Shafto's eldest son was a boy of fifteen at Eton !

Major Stanhope was in the toils : he stammered forth again some awkward compliment not half intelligible ; and Mr. Shafto was called up. The Major was introduced. It was discovered that he was one of a shooting party at Lord ——'s, nine miles off, and that he meant to drive back in his tandem.

Mr. Shafto dexterously obeying certain well-understood signals of his lady's eyes and fan, plied him so hard with polite entreaties, that he consented to drive his servant and his tandem three miles instead of nine ; sleep at Shafto Place ; breakfast there ; dawdle away a forenoon there, seeing grounds and being shown prospects which he foresaw would weary him to stupefaction, having no interest in his companions.

Even after this arrangement was made, Mrs. Shafto did not let her prey escape ; for she was anxious to keep him disengaged as a partner, until one of her daughters should have left the dance, and come to see what her mamma had been catering for her. She now turned the conversation upon field sports. Stanhope flew at the quarry ; and quickly found himself delivering a most able lecture upon how to raise, and how to bring down birds, &c. to an extremely fine lady, who was listening to it with the reverential attention of a disciple.

It was now Captain Fitz Arthur's turn to laugh ; but he smiled only, as passing to the dance with Miss O'Hara, he caught part of Stanhope's ardent harangue. "How merciless you are to the poor moor-fowl, Major Stanhope," Honoria could not forbear exclaiming, as she gayly curtsied by him ; "trying to inspire even our pitying sex with ambition to maim and slay." "I don't remember ever to have met you with dogs and a gun," she observed to her partner, without waiting for the Major's defence.

Fitz Arthur's heart throbbed at the complimentary tone of this question, till it was felt against the soft arm which rested on his ; he did not trust himself to an-

swer at the moment; but shortly afterwards said, in a voice of ill-disguised emotion, "I must not steal your good opinion; I was formerly far too fond of every exercise: I thought only of the exercise, and the exhilaration; but I once saw a sight, and heard a cry—" He stopt, not knowing how to tell, nor whether he should tell the rest.

Honorias earnest eyes were bent on him, the ready tear was already waiting. "I cannot tell you!" he continued. "It is enough that I have never since been able to go coursing;" and he turned from her, ashamed of the moisture rising to his own eyes.

The fact which Captain Fitz Arthur could not bring himself to narrate, was, simply, that a poor hare, of which he had been one of the pursuers, would have given birth to young, perhaps in a few hours, had not a cruel death prevented her; and it was these additional deaths of unborn creatures which fixed the pang inflicted by that well-remembered cry.

Perhaps Miss O'Hara, with her usual quickness, divined this fact, for she hastily bent down her head, and the next moment Fitz Arthur saw a large drop or two standing among the leaves of some geraniums in her bosom.

Never did lover more eagerly covet his mistress's bouquet, than did our poor unheeded one this very simple nosegay; the tears upon it were, in his eyes, worth all the diamonds of earth or sky.

Miss O'Hara, however, danced as gayly afterwards, as though no sad feeling had crossed her. It was the first time she had ever been Captain Fitz Arthur's partner, and he kept such perfect time with his few careless steps, his fine figure looked to such advantage among a great proportion of men too tall, too short, too fat, or too thin, and the expression of his shaded eyes was so much softer and sweeter than usual, that she *almost* remarked it.

At the instant of completing their share of the figure with the last couple in the dance, Captain Fitz Arthur begged his partner's pardon for a moment, while he

went to speak to a young lady just observed by him, in company with her chaperon. When he rejoined Honoria, she asked him the name of his very lovely friend? for she was struck with the modest and pensive loveliness of those downcast blue eyes, and that transparent fairness which Mrs. Shafto had lately been contrasting with her own darkness and brilliancy. "That was Miss Clavering," he replied. "I was her father's aid-de-camp when he commanded at Calcutta; and I had, therefore, frequent opportunities of being in her company. In truth, I was so domesticated with her during the first five years of my exile, and she was such a child when we were first acquainted, that but now I forgot myself, and called her Agnes. She is just out of mourning for her father, and I am sure comes even to our moderate dance with few spirits for it."

"Is she as sweet a creature as she looks?" asked Honoria, following with her eyes the slow and graceful progress of Miss Clavering's truly feminine form as she advanced up the room.

"Indeed, indeed, she is!" returned Fitz Arthur earnestly, "I only wish she may be happier than I fear—"

"I suppose I must not ask *why* you fear she is not happy?" said Honoria with a pleading tone; "her story belongs only to friends, of course."

"It has been too well known among a certain set of people," replied Fitz Arthur, "to be called a secret; I would still refrain from discussing it generally; but to you, Miss O'Hara! I will tell it you when we sit down between the dances, for I hope some day to make you and her known to each other."

The attention of both speaker and listener was now called to their duty as dancers, which each attended to with a creditable fidelity. As they approached the vicinity of Mrs. Shafto and Major Stanhope they were amused, in spite of softer thoughts, by catching, at intervals, snatches of their prolonged conversation.

Honoria was accustomed to amuse her uncle, after any little party, with the narration of whatever had occurred there of the comic or the interesting; and as in

all parties and battles, no one individual can be every where, each may have something new to tell his companion when he quits the scene of action. Thus, on the present occasion, Honoria was treasuring up traits of the ridiculous for harmless pleasantry in private; the following sentences particularly entertained her. Major Stanhope was drilling Mrs. Shafto in hunting.

"You should never ride more forward than the tail of the pack; a few yards or so wide of the tail is the thing: for it must be a shocking bad pack, indeed, if you can't see the front hound from the tail of it: and if your scent's bad, and you cross it (which you are likely to do by riding too forward,) it's all up with you. Nothing is so provoking too as a fellow's capping hounds when the scent's cold! it just plays the deuce with them—making them run all eager and abroad like so many geese."

"Doubtless, vastly vexatious to a practised sportsman," observed Mrs. Shafto complacently.

"Then the vexation of a stupid blockhead bullying your best young hound when he is cast, and trying all he can to get in! Such a fellow merits mobbing, more than any skirter in the pack; they're always doing mischief: if one of the hounds happens to go off with a bad scent, these sort of fellows halloo and clatter on with such a noise that the hound lifts, and you have a new scent to seek; then they regularly interfere at a check:—the most unhandsome, ungentlemanlike thing possible."

"Surely that is a reason why all except gentlemen ought to be excluded from a hunt," observed the very aristocratic Mrs. Shafto.

"Why, so I think," returned the liberal, English-hearted Stanhope, "if you mean gentlemen by spirit and manners; let me find these, and I tell you fairly, I don't much care, on my own account, whether the man I hunt with be a peer or a pastry-cook. I might be sorry on his, because he would lose so much time from making his pies, and earning his bread."

Honoria lost Mrs. Shafto's answer in the din and in-

tricacy of the dance; but Captain Fitz Arthur smilingly whispered as they changed sides, "That was said ludicrously by Stanhope, but its meaning was excellent. —Don't you think so?" Honoria's beaming look answered him.

When the set was over, Fitz Arthur led his partner to a seat, and there began the little history he had promised.

"I think it is about four years and a half since Miss Clavering, then not seventeen, left India with her mother, to join three sisters who had been previously sent to England for education. Our first news of her was, that she was going to be married to a young man of family and splendid endowments, though small fortune: that is, that Mrs. Clavering waited only for the General's sanction to the marriage. When the news came, the General was just embarking for England, whither he went, in the fond hope of establishing the happiness of a beloved child, and of passing the remainder of his days in the bosom of peace and affection. But circumstances had changed meanwhile; and ere he was two months on shore he broke off the match." "Oh, cruel!" exclaimed Honoria, inconsiderately, "if they were greatly attached!"

"No, it was not cruel," resumed Fitz Arthur, with apprehensive tenderness: "I fear it was kind—right! The lover, though exceedingly in love, and highly gifted, and possessed of many fine qualities, was, report said, addicted to high play; and certainly gave tokens of a despotic, and of a very unreasonable temper. The General would not trust a darling child's happiness in such hands; and Miss Clavering was too dutiful and noble-minded to resist an authority exerted upon just grounds."

"She was to have a large fortune, I dare say," exclaimed Honoria, somewhat indignantly; "and your General was ambitious for his lovely daughter."

"I shall appease you, I hope, by answering no!" returned Fitz Arthur, with a gentle smile. "When Miss Clavering engaged herself to her lover, the Gene-

ral had honourably realized a noble fortune, and she would have been portioned accordingly ; but the failure of a house in which this fortune was temporarily placed for investment in England, reduced the family to actual beggary ; while the increased wealth and honours of her lover's family, by the death of an unmarried uncle, widened the distance between their new situations.

"These circumstances, together with fears of the young man's steadiness, (for he had hastily abandoned an honourable career in life for the vision of retirement with the woman he loved,) made the General decide upon terminating an engagement entered into when the parties were of equal prospects. Soon after which my old friend breathed his last sigh, amidst doubts and anxiety for those he left behind. Mrs. Clavering and her four daughters were then limited to the pension allowed her as his widow:—so that when Mrs. Letitia Branspeth, the General's cousin, declared her resolution of making Miss Clavering her heiress, in consequence of that young lady's dutiful and judicious conduct, (as she styled it,) a new fetter was put upon poor Agnes Clavering's inclination. Mrs. Branspeth had early credited the reports against her young relation's lover, and her favour was to be secured only by adherence to the system of discarding him."

"This, then, is the young lady I have heard so much envied for her good fortune!—Poor girl, I pity her!" was Honoria's energetic exclamation. "For having six thousand a-year in perspective?" "No, not for that;—but what has money to do with happiness?"

Captain Fitz Arthur did not reply to this every-day question of the inexperienced: at that moment he could have answered, "Every thing;"—but he was silent.

"And does she come from Aycliffe Castle to a ball, after all this?" asked Honoria somewhat censoriously; "is it not twenty miles from this?"

"I believe it is," was the reply: "But Mrs. Letitia is only come into the country to look at some extensive alterations going on at Aycliffe. She and two

of the Misses Clavering are staying at lady Henderson's ; whence they will return to Bath, where Mrs. Letitia has been living these last three years on account of a rheumatic complaint. I suspect my father is solely indebted to the old lady's great regard for him, for Agnes's company. The poor girl carries the look of a victim with her into gay society."

"And may I ask something about the person she was to have married!—Has he proved worthy or unworthy?"

"I scarcely know how to answer you," replied Fitz Arthur, "for I am unacquainted with his immediate connexions ; and the removal of Mrs. Clavering to Lisbon last autumn, for the health of her youngest girl, deprives me of her confidential communications. I believe, however, that he was not an habitual gamester, and that he was disinterested, though absurdly visionary ; he had some very preposterous notions upon the nature of confidence and affection. I'll give you an instance of it.—He certainly made confession of his first follies to Mrs. Clavering, when soliciting the hand of her daughter, and coupled it with the solemn assurance that he had never touched a card or thrown a dice since then. But when the General questioned him upon a story, related to the former by a friend of whose veracity and good intention he had a twenty years' experience, the young man took fire, considered his truth and honour insulted ; and though owning that he could satisfactorily explain every circumstance of the story, proudly insisted upon unconditional trust in his assertion. The General, unhappily, was as choleric as the other showed himself to be arrogant ; and they parted in mutual bitterness. In the same spirit of distempered, exacting unreasonableness, the lover then insisted upon Agnes's sanction to his conduct. She distinctly avowed her firm belief in his truth, but admitted a father's right to challenge sober matter of fact. This justice offended his haughty temper, it wounded his overstrained sensibility, and he abruptly broke with her.

"Still, however, he loved her sincerely, though thus

waywardly ; for I know that immediately on her father's death he renewed his addresses, urging her to marry him, in spite of the rich relation, whose fortune she would forfeit along with her favour."

"That was generous, surely!"

"At first sight it seems so," was Fitz Arthur's reluctant answer : "but surely it was selfish when looked into. Mrs. Branspeth is violently his enemy ; and had Miss Clavering persisted in giving him any encouragement, as her mother has always been his advocate, not only Agnes would have forfeited, but the whole family would have lost their ample support through her means. The lover, generous as he was, could not have provided for so large a family of daughters : his independence was not above fifteen hundred a year ; and he had slighted advantageous opportunities of getting forward in public life. Surely, therefore, he was tempting the amiable Agnes to make him happy at the expense of her future peace ! hers is not a heart to enjoy domestic happiness—the greatest of all," (Fitz Arthur smothered a sigh,) "while conscious she had caused the poverty and broken the hopes of three young sisters. Yet she loved this impassioned young man too dearly not to suffer almost mortal anguish from her inward struggles. Should he not have spared her those struggles—relied on her heart—tried to redeem himself in her friend's opinion, and waited with patient constancy for the chances of the future?" Honoria turned on him a look of sad conviction. "I fear you are right," she said. "What a lamentable perversity of judgment in one who you say is so distinguished otherwise ! poor Miss Clavering !" "Yes, I cannot understand such self-indulgence, at the cost of the being, dearest to us on earth," resumed Fitz Arthur, insensibly mixing his own feelings with those of the two persons he was considering. "The sentiment of real and right affection appears to me to be expressed by these lines :—

"O 'tis not pride !—it is not pride
Which makes me thus determined shun thee ;
Thou canst not love, and I would hide
The tearful eye and wasted cheek,

The struggling sigh that fain would speak
Reproach, and say thou hast undone me !
I would not pain that heart of thine,
For all the joys that might be mine !”

Fitz Arthur repeated the lines with a raised colour, and something of tremor in his voice : his own heart was not calm enough to let him pursue the subject ; and he was not sorry that the calls of merciless dancers broke up the *tête-à-tête*, and replanted them in their places at the foot of the dance.

The second dance gone down, Fitz Arthur led Honoria back to her uncle, (for Mrs. Meredith was at cards,) only to see her hand sought and obtained by another ; to see her dance again with as much grace and hilarity as she had done with him, and others before him ; to hear her laugh, talk, amuse, enchant all within eye or ear-shot of her ; and still to observe that she was doing it with the unconscious charm of a child.

Honoria, believing that her veins flowed with as good blood as the best at Arthur's Court, properly estimating the sacred profession of her uncle, whether in a curate's gown or an archbishop's robes,—quite at home where Sir Everard Fitz Arthur was master,—and too early, perhaps, habituated to company, felt as much at her ease at a ball with country gentry as if she had been on the hill-side among the sheep. She was radiant with colour, smiles, and the sparkling of those dark eyes and white teeth, which might be seen, as Sir Everard expressed it, from the bottom of a coal-pit. She was simply dressed in fine India muslin, wearing no ornaments except a single row of small but exquisite pearls belonging to her great aunt, and a bunch of scarlet geraniums in her bosom.—Beauty dresses itself.

The Misses Shafto, in clinging black lace dresses, with gold borders, spangled fillets, and gaudy armlets high above the elbows of their long lean arms, were strikingly different.

“Don't those women look as if we were playing at snap-dragon with them ?” whispered a witting in the room to his companion. The question was not unapt ;

for the sister shades, naturally of chalky whiteness, were rendered of a ghastly blue, by a freezing January night, and the scantiness of their clothing. The colour of their eyes, too, seemed discharged by the wringing effect of extreme cold; so that three more rueful aspects could not well be imagined. However they were the Misses Shafto, and Sir Everard's Fitz Arthur's kinswomen, and Delaval had duly danced with each, after performing the same duty to ladies of higher rank.

"*The impertinent Miss O'Hara*" had come very low in their gallant cousin's list; and he would fain have made her come later, that he might have stood by her at supper, (for the ladies were to sit, and the gentlemen stand,) but he denied himself the gratification. He denied it himself, not from cowardly shame of so betraying his affection for a lovely and deserving girl, but from the generous wish of leaving her free to seek, and find, perhaps, in him who should secure this brief privilege, the man destined to please and win her for life.

Poor Fitz Arthur! how imperfectly was he known, how imperfectly was he valued by the heart that, had it been fully aware of his sterling worth, could, and would have given him its warmest affection!

Honorina had seen the heir of Arthur's Court at first through a cloud of prejudices; and a host of false notions continued to keep the cloud from falling. Was the mist ever to disperse? or was it to disperse too late?

She was this evening better pleased than ordinary with Captain Fitz Arthur. He had interested her by his unostentatious sensibility while speaking of Miss Clavering; and she remembered with pleasure his hope, that they might be known to each other hereafter. Still, however, she had seen him dance and talk with others, in perfect composure of heart.

After going down one dance with Mr. Tudor (the tutor of His Grace of ——'s young sons,) she seated herself for the short interval between that and its succeeding one.

Except that Mr. Tudor talked too much of the Tiber, and the coliseum, and the roses of Pæstum, and

was rather apt to take offence, he was a tolerably respectable partner, even for a beauty. Mr. Tudor had a genteel figure ; a smooth face ; wore powder because he thought it right in a tutor so to do (though he was under thirty, and powder was just gone out of fashion ;) had hands almost as white as the very white linen conspicuous at his wrists, and above the collar of his well-brushed black coat ; spoke in a measured voice ; and was withal inclined to take a very fair share in the decent pleasures of life.

"These happy geraniums !" he observed, with a look which he intended should convey a mixture of profound respect and ardent admiration. "These happy geraniums remind me of the splendid vegetation of Italy, that *Hesperides* of the world ! I remember once going into *villeggiatura* with the Prince of Santa Croce (that was when I had the honour of travelling with the Honourable Mr. Harrington)—(going into *villeggiatura*, I ought to inform you, Miss O'Hara, is the term by which the Italians express the act or custom of removing into the country to enjoy certain seasons of the year)—such of us *villeggianti* (so they designate persons in *villeggiatura*) as were of cultivated tastes, made frequent excursions from the villa of His Highness ; and I recollect going with another enthusiast like myself, (pardon my present fervour in reverting to it, Miss O'Hara,)" *parenthesised* this pedant, with the frigid rules of a statue, "to ascertain the site of Horace's Sabine farm. On the banks of the Livenza (the *Digentia* of the poet,) we were ravished with the beauty of the flowers. I had seen the roses of *Pastum* and *Præneste*, but never had I beheld such perfect *color roseus* as in the flowers growing wild there, under that *stillatus æther* ; never such *color roseus* except on the cheek of one living beauty." And Mr. Tudor bowed his powdered pate till it almost touched the dust of the ball-room.

"But surely, Mr. Tudor," exclaimed Honoria, "a scholar like you must have found much higher objects of admiration than roses, lovely as roses are ?"

"That remark is highly creditable—that question I

mean," cried Mr. Tudor, scrupulously correcting himself,—“highly creditable to your fine intellect, madam;” (he spoke in a tone something between pomposity and pathos;) “the *Campagna di Roma* (ancient *Latium*) is full of interest to the scholar. He is surrounded by monuments of those great masters of the world; environed, as it were, by fine associations. The shades of Horace, Cicero, Virgil, and Mæcenas meet him at every step; they may almost be termed the *Dii Indigetes* of the

‘Horrentique atrum nemus imminet umbra.’

The line may be thus Anglicised:—

‘The dark grove hanging with terrific shade.’

Miss O'Hara, I am certain a lady of your taste and fine susceptibility to all that is splendid and heroic, must participate in my passion for the ancient Romans.”

“Must I confess,” Honoria said, “that I have read very little about them; and that what I have read, makes me fancy them disagreeably theatrical in most of their splendid actions? so tyrannical too, with the word liberty always in their lips! so cruelly callous to private suffering—so regardless of private comfort.”

Mr. Tudor did not exactly understand her meaning in the last word, he smiled consequentially, yet tempering the majesty of the smile by a most lover-like spread of his ring-embellished hand over his bending breast, he exclaimed, “I beg your pardon, fair lady!—You would not frame such an opinion, could you take a leisure survey of the proofs still extant of their attention to general comfort and private accommodation. What are their *stratas vias*, their *vias silice stratas*? their *vicinales* (cross roads leading from farm to farm?) their *lapide quadrato stratas* (roads uniting symmetrical beauty with utility?) their *basilicæ* and *calcidæ* (porticoed structures appropriated solely to the use of pleaders and merchants)—(admirably constructed too, so as to afford shade in summer, and warmth in winter?) Then their *stationes* (extensive halls open at all

hours of day and night for the reception of houseless poor)—(the Greeks, indeed had invented something similar, which they called *leschæ*!) their *taberna meritoria* (a sort of Chelsea hospital for invalid soldiers!) their *thermopolia* (elegant and pleasing places of lounging, similar to our best coffee or club houses)—(these to be sure were not introduced till after the Punic war!) Then, my dear madam, the admirable construction of their houses:—their rooms formed in a manner to admit or exclude the sun's rays, as the season for inhabiting them required; their *carbasa*, or blinds; their *valvæ*, or ventilating windows. The felicitous distribution of their villas into three separate divisions: the *urbana*, for the family; the *rustica*, for the husbandmen; the *fructuaria*, for the magazine of household plenty and provision. Every noble mansion has its *triclinium*, or summer eating-room, in the centre of a grove or lawn; its *valetudinarium*, a quarter for the sick. Every species of fowl or quadruped had their distinct dwelling. The comfort of all was attended to. Nay, we even read of a *glirarium*.” “Have pity on me Mr. Tudor!” cried Honoria with mock distress; “I don't know a word of Latin.—Pray what is a *glirarium*?”

“I beg ten thousand pardons!” exclaimed the self-complacent lover, “a *glirarium* is a dwelling for dormice. Then their fountains, Miss O'Hara! you should have been in Italy to feel, in all its exquisiteness, the luxury of

‘Illa cadens raucum per levia murmur
Saxa ciet’

Once more I solicit pardon! but our miserable language supplies us with none of those ‘*verba seu epitheta valde ad descriptionem accommodata*’ which the classical scholar always uses in thought.”

“O, if you regularly think in a dead language, Mr. Tudor, you are awful! I dare not stay a moment longer near you.” And with the rapidity of light, Honoria started up and flew to take possession of a seat just vacated beside Mrs. Fothergill. Mr. Tudor, after a moment's pause, followed and bowing stiffly, inquired with

a mortified air whether he was to understand that it was Miss O'Hara's cruel pleasure not to go down the second dance with him?"

"O no! certainly I will complete my engagement, only you must allow me to be dumb all the while, *till I have learned Latin.*" Even the playfulness of her smile and glance could not atone for the supposed affront put upon Mr. Tudor's deified language—of ridicule, he concluded such an august subject incapable;—he bowed more stiffly, slowly repeating, "*You must excuse me, Madam, if I decline accepting what I perceive would be a sacrifice.*" And with the air of one scorning her hand at the altar, the indignant lover walked magnanimously away.

Honorina used to his huffy fits, and aware how quickly they were forgotten, where she was the offender, rejoiced in the power of sitting still, for at least half an hour; and she therefore gave her attention willingly to Mrs. Fothergill, who was suddenly inspired with a few questions regarding the arrangement of the rooms, and how the dinner was thought to have gone off.

During the long pauses between these important questions, Honorina, who was luckily shaded by the folds of a curtain, therefore sure of not being asked to dance till inclined to put herself forward, was amused by an audible dialogue between our witling, Mr. Sawbridge, and Major Stanhope.

"So you have escaped at last, eh, poor Stanny!" was the salutation. "Egad, I thought it was all over with you: when I descried you in the fangs of Mrs. Shafto—always delicately pared, I must confess, but still fangs."

"To be sure it grew into a bore at last;" replied the good-tempered officer: "but Mrs. Shafto is really a very civil-meaning person; and they give me a bed at their house to-night."

"Yea, verily! and they will cheerfully give thee a wife to-morrow, if thou dost merely hint a wish of the kind."

"That's being much too civil!" was the careless reply.

"However, as I detest a cold drive in a raw morning, or in a dark night, among a parcel of fellows after a ball, one half of them sulky, and t'other half drunk with conceit, because the women have been quizzing them into fancying themselves admired, I am vastly obliged to those Shaftos for housing me to-night."

"And what are they to do with you to-morrow?"

"Show me some place, I believe—really I forget—but it don't signify, for I shall be off directly after breakfast."

"The old trap! the old trap! and you talk of breaking out! poor Stanny! and you are to see a view from the top of a Belvidere?"

"Pshaw, no!—yes,—I think she did say something of a Bel-something."

"That woman kills me!" exclaimed Sawbridge, laughing to suffocation. "She is capital! She's precisely like the man in the Vicar of Wakefield, with his one speech of the cosmogony of the world. My dear fellow! and didn't she talk about the fine effect of singing, when heard from a certain underground grotto there?"

"No, no—yes—no—yes, faith, I remember." Here Major Stanhope laughed also, though it was after his own fashion, foolishly; for he felt silly, and on the verge of being taken in.

Sawbridge went off in what he called *fits*, which literally meant successive bursts of laughter; and when he recovered, with difficulty articulated, "All this was played upon me, seven years ago. I am proud to say it was the very first performance of the lady's: it was when Miss Shafto first *came out*. At that time I was a *catch*, a *bonne partie*, as the ladies phrase it. I had then my fair estates clear; not a soul of the tribes of Israel was of my acquaintance. I was, moreover, a simpleton of two and twenty. Of course, the very first time I appeared among the natives, I was invited to dine and sleep at the Place. At dinner the elegant Emily ate only vegetables and boiled chicken, drank iced water, was full of *les petites attentions, et les petits*

soins. In the evening no boring with song after song; Mrs. Shafto knew the *carte du pays* too well for that; so we had *jeux de société*, and *I shone*! that hit me devilish hard, I own: she was near hooking me. Next morning a breakfast *recherché*, side table covered with fruits and flowers, all to please my very refined taste, having just returned from Greece: the perspective of one with cold meat, and Mr. Shafto, seen through the folding doors of an inner room. At our table, Miss Shafto herself, presiding over the fragrant coffee-urn; clean and nice as her cambric handkerchief. She was prettyish then, by dint of frilling and furbelowing; now unluckily out of fashion."

"Was! O that's too bad, Sawbridge."

"Faith, seven years delve deep into beauty!" resumed the critic. "However, Miss Shafto still dresses her feet uncommonly well. They'll take you in. You'll fancy she has pretty feet. So you will be *walked* to the Belvidere (especially if the wind blows *moderately*;) Mrs. Shafto will trip up the endless staircase just before you, you of course having offered your arm to the mother; then Miss Augusta will break out below from the grotto, with 'Sweet Echo, sweetest nymph,' in her voice of the peacock; after which—"

"No,—no,—no afters, I beseech you, Sawbridge!" interrupted Stanhope, annoyed at the humiliating notion of making one in a file of missed shots. "I won't hear another word."

Sawbridge held him fast by some of his military trappings. "Stay one moment, only one moment," cried the inexorable jester. "I am not going to say another word about the Shaftos; only tell me if you ever had the good luck to see a Fetch?"

"A what! What the devil's a fetch?" exclaimed Stanhope, not aware any lady overheard his demi-profane adjuration.

"Why in Scotch, a wraith; in French, a double; in English, your own ghost, or any other person's: they and you in the body, though—"

"Pshaw—stuff—man! you're beside yourself."

"Then I'm my own fetch," smartly observed Mr. Sawbridge; "but only do me the favour of looking down the room, and you'll see Miss Shafto's at this very moment. By gad, a dainty economical spirit, for she represents all the three sisters at once!"

Honorina looked in the direction Mr. Sawbridge mentioned, and was not a little amused by the sight of Miss Bella Preston sailing up the room, in the exact costume of the Misses Shafto.

Miss Bella had so actively intercepted the secret of these ladies' dresses, that she was actually their poly-graphic copy: like all copies rather overcharged: for she had more gold borderings, more spangles on her fillet, and gaudier armlets; added to which, she was herself taller and thinner, and the train of her lace dress was at least half a yard longer.

At that period, trains were sometimes said to be driving off in the shut of a carriage-door, while the wearers were just dropping their curtsy at the head of their entertainer's staircase.

"And behold Tilburina also! Tilburina gone mad!" exclaimed our witling, pointing his eye-glass at the pursy Miss Dulcy, arrayed in veils and white satin; an undersized man in brown on one side of her, and a smirking one in pepper-and-salt on the other. "Behold Tilburina between '*the polyanthus mean, and dapper daisy*'!"

Major Stanhope could not refuse something beyond a smile to this ridiculous quotation, and the more ridiculous group it pictured. Sawbridge choaking with mirth, went on, "I wish you had been with me twenty minutes ago, in the tea-room, when those people entered; there was another man with them. Such a treat! three such treats!—If I were the proprietor of those people, I would not sell them for a thousand pounds apiece; I vow to gad they were as good as Punch and his wife, ay, and the devil into the bargain."

Here Mr. Sawbridge was choaked with the recollection of what his friend now loudly called on him to repeat.

"Why, there was the man," he endeavoured to say, "a spruce, slim prig of a fellow,—a stiff college-man,—a regular sap, I'll bet you a hundred!—talking of the Coliseum and the Conscript Fathers, and the Pæstum rose; flourishing about with his white hands to show them off, and an antique ring, big enough for a padlock—tenderly advising *the fetch* to drink sugared water, as the ladies of ancient Latium were supposed to owe their velvet skins to that beverage. Then the fetch's answer by way of French for Mentor, 'Ah, you are always a *menteur*?' Then Tilburina, 'But are not all saccharine substances or fluids inimical to the teeth? Do they not deteriorate?' Then, 'St. Peters' and 'the Vatican,' and 'the Pope' from the prig; and the '*Sacré collègé des Cardinaux*' from the fetch. O, capital! She shall teach the tongues to all my children that are to be! Hold me, my dear fellow, I shall break in twain with laughing."

Mr. Sawbridge's mirth was in fact so excessive, that many eyes were directed towards the place where he stood; some curiously, others in displeasure.

Major Stanhope, who was truly wellbred, and somewhat modest, kept repeating, "You are too bad, Sawbridge: pray be quiet. You are really too bad;" but Sawbridge was i' th' vein, and on he went.

"Then comes the county member's wife with some pretty apology to the fetch, and the mad blue-stocking, about not having returned a late visit of their mamma's. Upon which, my fetch, fetching up her very best French, and meaning to be most extremely amiable and conciliatory, and to compliment my Lady Henderson, and tell her she was privileged in such neglects, being a sort of public character; says—says—" Sawbridge's laughter was actually choking him.

"Says! well, what does she say?" asked Stanhope, catching in spite of himself, the infection of his companion's overpowering laughter. "Don't keep the best joke to yourself after all."

Mr. Sawbridge was not in the least inclined to keep this super-capital blunder of Miss Bella's to himself;

but it was some time before his often-checked and as often-conquering laughter would permit him to be intelligible. He then hastily bent his face to Stanhope's.

What transposition of words was breathed into the Major's ear, Honoria did not attempt to catch ; she was satisfied to let it remain, as he had done

" Who left half-told
" The story of Cambuscan bold :"

concluding it must be something extremely awkward and absurd, from the convulsions of laughter into which even the well-bred officer immediately fell upon hearing it whispered.

As if by mutual agreement of no more provoking each other to such boisterous merriment, the two gentlemen retreated different ways ; leaving Miss O'Hara tolerably well inclined to laugh with them ; though grieved that such ridicule was in a manner deserved by the daughters of Mrs. Preston.

She had barely time to answer Mrs. Fothergill's repeated questions of what all that laughing was about, (for Mrs. Fothergill was rather deaf,) when two of the unconscious objects of Mr. Sawbridge's mirth came, the one fashionably smiling, the other sentimentally sighing, close up to her, with their ever-respectable mother.

" Dear, dear, Mrs. Preston !" half-exclaimed, half-whispered Honoria, warmly pressing the two hands affectionately held out, " I feared you were not coming."

The cordiality of their meeting made some ladies look as if they deemed it underbred ; yet every body affects cordiality : the reality then, is a fault ;—that is a mystery !

Mrs. Preston sat down between Mrs. Fothergill and Honoria, the Misses Preston preferred proceeding on a voyage of discoveries. Miss Dulcy was soon apostrophising the moon, through the painted glass of the windows, by the side of Mr. Tudor, listening with rapt attention to his learned catalogue of names for the God-

dess of the silver bow ; and begging hard to be allowed a little dislike to that of Hecate. While the faithful disciple of the ancients was endeavouring to inspire her sister with classical respect for a title degraded by vulgar notions only, Miss Bella looking and moving in all directions to detect every person of rank in the room, to register the peculiarities of their dress, and take minutes of their discourse, was elbowing her way (and formidable was that instrument in her person,) towards a very small parterre of young ladies with titles preceding their names.

In her progress, some one trod on part of her sweeping gown ; it rent with the withdrawing foot : the luckless destroyer started, stuttered, tried to apologize, held out his hand to save tottering Miss Bella from falling ; heard her good-humoured " O ! pray don't mind it ;" and still holding her hand with the confused look of the most easily-confused person in the world, stammered out, " a Miss Shafto, I believe ! I really, madam—I hope—I beg pardon ; I—I—may I beg the honour of leading you to—to—" a seat, he *would* have said, " to the *dance*," he *did* say.

Miss Bella knew not if she were awake or dreaming ; for the embarrassed, rueful-looking speaker, who was all the while nervously squeezing an opera hat under one arm, while with the other he was dragging her forwards, was no less a personage than the Marquis of Brinkbourn ; a near relation, and, therefore, frequent visitant of the noble duke in the neighbourhood : a single man ; and, barring a very miserable person, that seemed born for nothing but to sit shut up in a sedan chair all the days of its mortal existence, and a sheepish shyness which kept his whole body on the fidget, he might be considered a most brilliant partner, either for life, or in a dance.

Miss Bella's hand was now nervously griped by His Lordship's, her head was turning : her conscience was yet vigilant ; and making a truly heroic effort, she named herself, in contradistinction to Miss Shafto. But His Lordship was in the deep water, and there was no re-

treat for him, "All the same, madam; any lady here;" —and to the amazement of every one in the room, and out of the room, Miss Bella Preston was seen leading off "Drops of brandy" with the heir to a dukedom.

After the first buz of "Lord Brinkbourn's dancing with Miss Preston," "Where? where?" after the rush to look at them, the illustrious pair were left room to go down the dance, during which a feather might have been heard to drop.

Never, certainly, did illustrious pair acquit themselves worse. Lord Brinkbourn's diamond knee and shoe buckles were always catching different parts of his partner's dress; and Miss Bella's feet were so encumbered by her clinging lace train, which she had not taken time to fasten up properly, that fear and anxiety sharpened her visage visibly more and more.

This dancing with Lord Brinkbourn was certainly a martyrdom: like better martyrdoms it had its triumph, and its reward. Miss Bella was able to talk and write of it for the whole remainder of her life; and as she never let any one into the secret of His Lordship's foregone confusion and mistake, his selection of her as a partner, stamped herself and her family as *good society* to all eternity in their county.

The few women of rank at Arthur's Court were too well acquainted with Lord Brinkbourn's embarrassed manner not to divine the jest; and they were entertained. They were also too well bred to give it utterance beyond their own little set. But the half-way ladies, those who skirted the awful heights of rank and fashion, were exceedingly affronted; declaring the Marquess's choice of such a partner, an absolute insult to all their county beauties.

Mrs. Shafto reconciled herself to it, first, by fancying Miss Preston owed her honour to the otherwise gross copy of her daughters' dresses; then by believing it would be a mortal blow to Miss O'Hara's pretensions as one of these mortal divinities: to be thus publicly pronounced inferior to Miss Preston, by the heir to a dukedom, must infallibly annihilate every particle of ad-

miration she had inspired ; yet how admired she had heard her ! Mrs. Shafto looked round the room to see whether Honoria did not owe this transient supremacy to a particular dearth of pretty faces. But there were the two Ladies Lumley, with their skins of ivory, brows of jet, lips of coral, and looks of languishment : there were the four blushing daughters of the Dean of —, with the countenances and shapes of Hebes ; looking through nut-brown curls with the eyes of youthful joyance : then there was the pretty Lady Catherine Eustace with her slight form, light wreathing hair, eyes and veins of azure, eluding every attempt to detain her with a pretty coquetry which gave her the resemblance of a *thing of air* ; lastly, there was Mrs. Branspeth's heiress, lovely, decidedly lovely, but so much too-retreating ! How vexatious that this attractive heiress should be exactly what was calculated to set Miss O'Hara's style of beauty more strikingly off ! Miss Clavering was so very fair ; so very still ; so very downcast looking ! Miss O'Hara was so dark and bright at once ; so brilliant, yet so *blushful* ! Some one in Mrs. Shafto's hearing had compared these two beauties to the pearl and the diamond ; it was insupportably mortifying ! However, Mrs. Shafto was comforted by the persuasion that Major Stanhope was either brow-beaten or flattered out of his sudden admiration of Miss O'Hara ; for after dancing with Miss Augusta Shafto, he had taken refuge at the whist-table, where he was losing his money as fast, and as good-humouredly as possible.

Captain Fitz Arthur was relieved when he looked into the card-room and saw the Major at the same table with his father ; Sir Everard's partner of course ; for when did Sir Everard ever win ?

But a new rival had arisen to disturb poor Fitz Arthur's serenity, in the person of Miss O'Hara's last partner, Mr. Frazer of Dunraven ; a Highland laird, with the quick keen eye, and manly bearing of his country ; one that had travelled much, observed closely, and remembered all he considered note-worthy ; a fluent speaker, without oratorical ornament ; not a professed seeker of

women's society, therefore the likelier to be wholly fascinated by one charming individual.

At dinner, Mr. Frazer had sat on the same side of the table with Miss O'Hara, too distant to hear or be heard by her ; he was deep in debate with her uncle, whom he knew merely as the clergyman of Edenfell, and chose, therefore, to fall upon, as a fit opponent in a learned field.

Frazer was naturally of a keen and controversial spirit which loved to grapple with an argument merely for the sake of feeling its own strength. Habit, and a roving life spent among strangers in foreign lands, had increased this inclination, and accustomed him, besides, to a certain freedom of address, and way of pouncing upon subjects, which sometimes disgusted, sometimes captivated people, just as their passions, prejudices, or opinions, did or did not run parallel with his.

Neither the time allotted for dinner, nor an hour afterwards, nor the period hitherto passed in the ball-room, had been sufficient for his eager appetite ; so that he was still combating, with equal vigour and ability, the merely bookish reasonings of Mr. Meredith against the fantastical theory of black being the original colour of mankind ; when, accidentally turning his head, his deep-set gray eyes met the large, liquid, and earnestly-attentive ones of Honoria. Perhaps it was as much the complimentary expression of those eyes, as the brightness of them which arrested and fixed him ; for the hardy colouring of his cheek brightened with evident pleasure, while he said, in an audible under tone, "There, sir ! look there, and tell me if darkness may not be light ? blackness, beauty ?" Mr. Meredith seeing his niece, smiled ; sighed, from some half-faded recollections ; and, claiming her, presented his new acquaintance. Honoria, after a few civil words, entreated her uncle and the laird to finish the discussion, to which she had been listening, she said, with delightful interest. Mr. Meredith excused himself : he was weary of talking and attending to arguments ; and he

was used to early hours ; and the chaise was to come for him at twelve o'clock, and it waited, and he must be gone. Mrs. Meredith was at cards in another room : Honoria could not be left sitting with Mr. Frazer, so there was no alternative but to dance with him—to the dance therefore Mr. Frazer led her.

Among his other acquirements, the Laird of Dunraven was a geologist. The origin of mountains, and the origin of nations were subjects equally attractive to his inquisitive spirit. Though but eight and thirty, he had traversed half Africa and Asia in pursuit of certain data upon which to found some favourite theories. His present residence in the north of England was the consequence of some fossil remains of "lions or unicorns" having been found in a cave there, which he wished to examine. Every body stared, therefore, when they saw the philosopher dancing with Mr. Meredith's niece.

Miss Augusta Shafto, who had of late taken a passion for fossils and minerals, even to learning the mystery of making spars out of vitriol and alum, now turned as green as one of her own compositions. Mrs. Shafto quietly shrugged up her shoulders, whispering, "That girl will run herself out of breath, you'll see. She goes too fast, and with too many, to secure one. Don't mind, my love."

"I mind, ma'am !" repeated the haughty ill-tempered Miss Augusta ; "be so good as to spare your pity."

By the time that Honoria, light and graceful as mist blown on the wind, and Dunraven with the vigorous bound of a Scottish foot, had reached the bottom of the dance, Honoria's long hair got unfastened, and she hastily sat down that she might twist it up again, without attracting attention. A complimentary quotation from Ossian dropt the spark, and Honoria's enthusiasm blazed up directly. She talked of Ossian—of green Erin, where so many of his scenes are laid ; she found Mr. Frazer had been there, knocking at the Giant's Causeway, with pick-axe and hammer. He knew all the dear bleak hills, the brown turf bogs, the blue lochs,

the flax fields,—nay, every bleaching-ground round and about fondly cherished Ballygarry.

Honorina was suddenly and powerfully affected. The subject had taken her by surprise, in a scene so different ! It was like being hastily waked ; and she was forced to answer gayly, that her answer might not overcome herself. “Och ! and is’nt it Hetty Macready that would have jôy and pride to see the gentleman !” she involuntarily exclaimed, with a smile on the quivering lip imitating the brogue. The smile fled : her eyes were sparkling with tears—tears, natural, unrepresible—tears, sacred to the memory of her country—to that of the home where she had been bred—to the ashes of her parents—to the dust of that kind relative to whose bounty she owed present independence.

“And who is Hetty Macready ?” asked Mr. Frazer, surprised by the mixed comic and pathetic of her tone. “I shall be only too happy to make the acquaintance of any friend of yours.”

“My hair *will* fall down ; I must fasten it better :” was her evasive exclamation, at starting up and putting her hand to its careless knot, she ran through an opened door into one of the passage rooms. She paused here, not to adjust her hair, but to wipe away the tears that were crowding fast into her eyes, and to chide herself, both for the emotion she was betrayed into, and the thoughtless exclamation she had made about her nurse. It seemed to claim Mr. Frazer’s further acquaintance, and as such she regretted it.

And how foolishly weak was her present emotion ! How often had she spoken of Ireland to Mrs. Preston, and spoken with sadness perhaps, but always tranquilly ! Honorina forgot, that although she often talked of her country, she had never, till now, met any one in Northumberland, who spoke to her as having been there. The mere circumstance of Mr. Frazer’s knowing all her old haunts and some of her earliest acquaintance, seemed to raise them before her. Mr. Frazer’s vivid mode of referring to places and persons was a sort of return to dear Ireland. And should she

not weep, indeed, when she saw Ballygarry again? Why then might she not shed a tear now.

Honoraria wore her father's picture—it had once been her mother's—and she always wore it under her dress. She faintly remembered her last sight of her father; for he died in India when she was eleven years old. She was but seven when he went, and his wandering life before that, had given him few opportunities of seeing his child. She remembered the sad and serious expression of his aspect, however, with tender respect.

She now drew this miniature from her bosom, and bent her lips to it. On raising her head, she was abashed by meeting the eyes of captain Fitz Arthur. "My father's picture!" she said, blushing, and sliding it back. "I have been so foolish, Captain Fitz Arthur!" She could not say more without renewing her weakness.

"Tears, Miss O'Hara!" Fitz Arthur exclaimed, taking her hand with trepidation, and drawing her towards the room he had just quitted. "I hope no one here; I trust nothing under my father's roof——" It was Fitz Arthur's turn to stop for want of words. Honoraria hastened to relieve his kindly anxiety, by briefly and frankly telling him what had occurred; adding, "I just covet ten minutes to recover myself and cool my hot cheeks; for I must be a perfect pæony just now; and you know we silly girls stand dreadfully in awe of our own bad looks!"

"Well then, if you would not deem it incorrect to sit those ten minutes with Hylton, you will find him in that room alone, enjoying his share, poor fellow, of the dancing. I will carry your apology for the present to Mr. Frazer."

"Hylton alone!—I shall be so glad to have a little chat with him!" and disengaging herself from the trembling hand that scarcely touched the one it held, she vanished into a back room, where she found the pale placid boy, raised by cushions to a level with a small window overlooking the ball-room.

There was something heart-penetrating to her in this

view of Hylton ; his sickly look, languid attitude, his well-known helplessness, his glass of toast and water, his tasteless biscuit, nay, the very silence and solitariness of the chamber he was in, struck Honoria as peculiarly dismal, when contrasted with the glare, the noise, the mirth, the music, feasting, and festivity of the one she had left and he was looking into. When she remarked the meek and patient, nay, pleased expression of his pallid features, she could almost have asked his pardon for having been joyous.

"And you are alone Hylton !" she said tenderly.

"Yes, just at this moment, dear Miss O'Hara," returned the amiable boy, extending his sallow hand to her ; "but I have had visitors all the evening. Your kind uncle left the dinner-room to play a game at chess with me before the ball began ; since then I have had my father and good Sir John Henderson, and dear, dear Delaval several times—he was here only a moment ago ; and Abbot is only gone to get some supper before he puts me in my chair and carries me to bed : nobody is taken so much care of as I am ; and now a lady comes to visit me ! Will you sit down by me awhile, or have you an agreeable partner waiting ?"

Honoria was seated by Hylton instantly ; she was touched by his artless resignation to a fate peculiarly dreadful to one of that active sex, whose destination in life appears that of action.

The boy's taste, habits of thinking, of reading, and of feeling, all tended to make him look with bitter regret upon a misfortune which would blight his usefulness, perhaps exclude him from much of the happiness of this world, and certainly incapacitate him from pursuing any path of honourable ambition ; a fate which would condemn him to dependence upon the humours and fortunes of those to whom he belonged ; a fate suffering and solitary : yet to such a fate Hylton appeared unaffectedly resigned.

The early lessons of his meek-spirited mother had been followed by the friendly tuition of Mr. Meredith ;

and insensibly imbibing a taste for religious studies, he found at once an object of pursuit on earth, and a blissful incitement to press on to Heaven. Hylton's wishes would have led to the church as a profession, had his health permitted him to hope he should ever be able to fulfil its high duties: that impossible, he aimed at one day serving the sacred cause by his pen. Even now he wrote with ease and some elegance, and all his serious reading had the elucidation of Scripture customs or Scripture doctrines for its chief purpose. His regrets moderated by the nature of his studies, he was solicitous only to show gratitude for the kindness bestowed upon his wearying feebleness. He knew his brother's generous heart was often laden with the fear that all had not been done that might have been, had his mother lived longer, or Sir Everard been less indolent: and eager to convince him that Hylton could be as happy in his wheeled chair, or on his sofa, as the most active man on his feet, or on a horse, he was always to be found amusing or employing himself; ever thanking Heaven that the most precious avenue of enjoyment was left him—that of sight.

Forced bodily inactivity often renders the mind more active: it was so in Hylton's case. He reflected even more than he read; for prolonged study being forbidden him by his physician, he read only such works as bore upon the subject most interesting to him. In this practice he was encouraged by his brother, whose judicious tenderness rejoiced to foster a taste or an ambition which tended to fortify the soul of Hylton against those natural sensibilities, which a passion for poetry and romance must have heightened. The society of well-informed persons, willing to answer the boy's sensible questions upon general subjects, was therefore of peculiar consequence to him—it stood in lieu of books.

"I am so pleased when I can get a page or two of you, dear Miss O'Hara," he said playfully. "I call you my story-book—you are so delightful! dear Delaval is my history."

"Nothing better than that!" exclaimed Honoria. "Poor Captain Fitz Arthur to be only dry history."

"Oh! but he is my Iliad and Odyssey too!" Hylton said hastily, jealous of his brother's reputation: "he makes me admire danger and warlike actions, too—too much sometimes." (The poor boy sighed, and a tinge of colour was visible through his pale cheek.) "I often think that admirable Hector must have been like my brother."

"I dare say!" was Honoria's answer, smiling with mixed expression. "At any rate, that hideous picture in the gallery is not the least like Captain Fitz Arthur."

"O, I am so glad you think so!" cried Hylton. "It is so very ill-looking; and Delaval is so very handsome!"

"Sweet boy! amiable boy!" burst involuntarily from Honoria; "how you love your brother!" "Every body in the house loves him," returned her young companion. "He makes every body so happy! My dear father is quite a different person since he came home: even Thomas is not so naughty and rude with him, as he is with us. But then you see, Delaval is never put out of temper, let people be ever so cross or violent, and yet he never gives up a point."

Honoria's feelings were in the mood suited to these overflowings of a heart full of our first best feelings, pure as they came from their spring. With more abandonment to her own sensibility, than her gay temper ever allowed in herself before witnesses, she suffered her eyes to suffuse, while she uttered a few kind questions, calculated to encourage Hylton in pouring forth this fond opinion of his brother.

In the midst of their interesting conversation, the slow step of John Abbot made her rise from her seat, and passing her hand over her eyes, she bade Hylton good night, in her usual tone of cheerful kindness. The next moment she was in the ball-room, and the moment after that claimed by Mr. Frazer, as the lady

upon whom he had the right of attending during supper.

For some time it was a most grievous supper to Captain Fitz Arthur. He stood directly opposite Miss O'Hara, behind the chair of Lady Catherine Eustace, who was either so fantastic as to like all sorts of things from the remoter end of the table, or was not unwilling, by such little commissions, to show her knight, a sworn one of hers being absent, that she would not disdain more flattering attentions from the heir of Arthur's Court. Continually moving to and fro, with confectionary, fruit, jellies, for the pretty coquette, he caught every now and then, just as much of Mr. Frazer's animated tones, looks, and gesticulations, as tortured him with the imagination of more. Mr. Frazer was holding forth upon a favourite theme, the Phœnician origin of the Irish. He talked so well, though so fast and hotly, that even Mr. Sawbridge, who was a listener, could not ridicule him. The occasion was tempting; for in truth, such a dissertation after a ball, in the presence of a score or two of young ladies, was not very well judged. Had the fashionable phrase been in use then, Mr. Sawbridge would indisputably have employed it; and, we should have heard him whisper, "Bad taste—exceeding bad taste."

Several of the by-standers, surprised at such a dissertation, pronounced the Laird of Dunraven a very odd person; no one called him vulgar. Nothing indeed is vulgar, except pretension. People who live much by themselves, may be rustic or clownish, or over-bearing in their manner; but unless they aim at appearing something better bred, or better informed than they really are, they can never be vulgar.

Frazer's intrepid eccentricity, as much as the language he displayed it in, proclaimed him of *gude blude*; he was therefore suffered to go on without the interruption of a single contemptuous glance.

Captain Fitz Arthur almost envied the fluent tongue, and the sparkling satisfaction of Mr. Frazer: he quite envied him the delighted attention of Honoria, who

was leaning back to listen, though without taking any other share in the discourse. The yew-tree-shaped squire, who had sat next her at dinner, supported in this memorable exhibition of oratory, the honourable and useful part of the talking stock. Mr. Frazer being obliged to find some *sponsable* person, whom he must appear to be informing, ingeniously guessed at the capacity of the squire, as an Oh ! and Ah ! respondent ; and laying hands on him, stationed him by his side.

Honorina listened to them with a kindling face, and throbbing form, which showed what an interest she was taking in this genealogy of her country. Fitz Arthur now gave himself up for lost. Miss O'Hara had obviously captivated Mr. Frazer, and Frazer evidently perceived that he pleased her. Fitz Arthur saw it in the eager fire of his elated rival's eyes ; he heard it in the exulting tone of his voice. For some minutes our poor lover was utterly incapable of knowing what his fine lady tormentress wanted, or asked ; he was not sorry when he made out that she wished him to lead her to her chaperon, who was rising from the other end of the table, their carriage having been announced.

After duly escorting her sylph-like Ladyship along the halls and galleries leading to the grand entrance, seen her into her mother's coach, stood properly shivering without a hat, on the steps of the portico, till the coroneted vehicle drove off, Fitz Arthur returned with seven-league strides to the supper-room.

Greatest part of the company were returned to the dance, and the attendant gentlemen had now found seats beside their ladies. As he hoped, as he feared, he saw Miss O'Hara still there, and Mr. Frazer seated between her and Mrs. Meredith. The latter always last to leave an eating-room. Upon seeing Captain Fitz Arthur re-enter, (Honorina unconsciously at the instant, and afterwards she could not well say why she did it,) made a movement to rise, and leave her knight to finish his supper without her. Fitz Arthur remarked the movement, and the slight embarrassment of

manner which had followed the glance, that told her of his reappearance. A second time this evening, his heart throbbed with troubled, doubtful, lover-like hopes—the next moment, he was his sad self again.

“Sit down, Honor!” exclaimed Mrs. Meredith, not in her company voice, so alarmed was she at the idea of thus losing a mountain of trifle, which the shrewd Laird of Dunraven had just heaped her plate with. Electrified by the warning tone, Honoria was in her seat immediately: she dreaded an exposure of Mrs. Meredith’s temper.

Mr. Frazer was now talking of the *Æolian* harp. Honoria had never heard either that or the nightingale. The Laird was a great mechanic. “I will make you an *Æolian* harp in a week’s time,” he said, with easy gallantry, “if you will do me the honour of accepting it; but to hear the nightingale, you must allow some happy man to carry you to the South of France. I should recommend this very spring.”

Mr. Frazer was known to be on his way to the Pyrenees; and all who heard his present recommendation, considered it as a public proposal of marriage. Honoria, alone, did not understand any thing beyond the obvious meaning of his words, and with an unchanged countenance began playfully to question the superiority of the nightingale over her favourite skylark.

Mrs. Shafto, in her capacity of inquisitor-general, had remained with the lingerers round the supper-table. She now suddenly stretched across it addressing Mrs. Meredith with—“You and I never meeting any where, Mrs. Meredith, really has given me no opportunity of repeating my thanks for your so obligingly accommodating Signor Vocallino with a room at the parsonage to give my daughters their lessons. We are such a comfortably reduced party here, just at this moment, that I am sure the Misses Shafto will have infinite pleasure in showing you what their lessons have turned out.”

Mrs. Meredith was in as vulgar a fuss of acknow-

ledgments, and sense of the great honour, as the great lady could desire. She was quite sure, she said, that she should be charmed with the Misses Shafto's singing.—Such an education! They must be so accomplished! Often and often had she listened in the passage when the young ladies were singing with their master—and wished so that she might have gone in to them.

“And why did you not, my good madam?”

“O dear ma'am—gracious for ever! You can't suppose, ma'am, I should take such a liberty,—I could not think of any thing so unpolite,—I would not make so free for any money.”

Mrs. Shafto was all smiles and civility; her point was gained—the vulgarity of Miss O'Hara's relations (to quote fashionable slang,) completely *shown up* to the Laird of Dunraven. After this he could never repeat his recommendation of the South of France; probably he would not even choose to waste wood and wire upon an Æolian harp.

Miss Shafto and Miss Augusta secretly as much elated as their mother, by the brilliant success of her stratagem, cast a glance at the Laird, who they saw eyeing his vulgar neighbour with steady composure. Captain Fitz Arthur thought the Laird was considering how he should *cut her* entirely after he married Honoria; the Misses Shafto decided he was thinking how to *cut* at once both aunt and niece.

Under this agreeable impression they began to sing with a spirit quite unusual with them a popular duet in the opera of Dido.

“Very well, indeed! vastly well!” exclaimed Mr. Frazer, who always took the lead whenever any thing was to be said. “Your daughters credit their master, Mrs. Shafto: I really did not think when I heard them some months ago at your own house, that they could have been taught to sing half so pleasantly.” It must be remembered, that the Laird of Dunraven did not generally affect women's society; therefore, when his vanity or his heart were not ministered to by one of the sex he was somewhat unceremonious to them.

Another lady was solicited, and sang; then another and a gentleman with her. All chose Italian songs. "Italian music indifferently sung, is very poor work after all: very poor work!" muttered Mr. Frazer. Then exalting his voice, "Can, or will, no lady favour us with a song in our mother-tongue?"

"Certainly not in yours," observed Captain Fitz Arthur smiling, "unless Miss O'Hara knows Gaelic. I know she sings English, Irish, and Scotch ballads: and I am one of the unscientific who will plead for a song in an ordinary language."

Honoraria blushed vermillion, and would have excused herself; for, though quite hardened to singing before strangers when a child in Ireland, and singing now frequently in the garden to Mrs. Preston, or on the hill-side to her dog and the echoes, she was so entirely out of the habit of exercising her vocal powers in a circle, that she felt fluttered and irresolute—anxious to oblige, yet fearful of failing.

Mrs. Shafto was so sure that such an uneducated girl must sing out of time and tune—that she could know nothing of cadences—that, consequently, it would be so greatly to the Misses Shafto's advantage to let her sing, that Mrs. Shafto joined in the civil importunity. Even her daughters mangled some words of entreaty, as they lifted their eye-glasses with the precision of a military movement, and stared at the blushing attempt of Honoraria to laugh at her own nervousness.

A side glance from Mrs. Meredith determined our heroine. It was the flash before the thunder. Honoraria's red lips unclosed, and the balmy voice was heard.

She had accidentally chosen the beautiful melody of "Ye banks and braes o' bonnie Doon." Its pathetic simplicity was suited to her taste and her tones: and while those tones sank into every heart of human softness, not another sound was heard in the room. Every body was so attentive that Honoraria's agitation returned; and looking on either side, as if for help, she was on the point of abruptly stopping, when Captain Fitz Ar-

thur with something of tremor in his voice, gave timely support to her trembling notes, by a low and beautiful second.

The glittering illumination of her whole countenance amply repaid him for the violence he had done his own retiring character. She went admirably through the remainder of the song ; for the loveliness of his tones, and of his style, inspired her with yet tenderer softness than did the air itself. Certainly, when a man's voice is of a fine quality, it is capable of more expression, more variety ;—it has, in short, a mellower sweetness, and a deeper pathos than the voice of a woman. If, therefore, Honoria's notes wanted strength or fulness, Fitz Arthur's supplied them ; and as their voices, now receding, now advancing, now soaring into one, thrilled in the ear of Fitz Arthur, his heart thrilled also with momentary delight. For did not Honoria's spirit seem then mingling with his ?

But she had chosen a Scottish instead of an Irish air. It was quite clear, therefore, that she intended to please Mr. Frazer. This plain inference soberized the lover's fancy ; and when they concluded, with merely a pensive smile and bend of the head, he replied to her rapid acknowledgments : "To think I should never have heard of your singing !" she exclaimed. "Fie, Captain Fitz Arthur ! this is using your friends very shabbily."

Mrs. Shafto faced round upon our heroine, with a look of supercilious surprise. The words and manner of Miss O'Hara indicated that familiar companionship with their kinsman, which warranted a suspicion of further views in one of them at least. Mrs. Shafto was confounded. In her own thoughts she had long ago settled a marriage between her eldest daughter and the heir of Arthur's Court, provided nothing better stepped in ; and provided the estates were not ruinously dipped. Ever cautious of committing herself, the kind mother was only waiting for certain information from an ally, to begin her operations accordingly. So absorbed was she by the speculations suddenly excited

in her, that she failed to join the clamour of applause breaking in upon Miss O'Hara's exclamation.

"And who shall say, after this, that the nightingale is never heard in Northumberland?" ejaculated Mr. Frazer.

Honorina blushed, and vainly tried to turn aside the compliment by bending her head to her partner in the duet. Fitz Arthur felt heart-sick: the three thin shades turned green.

"Every lady her own Philomel!" muttered Mr. Sawbridge, who had lounged in with others at the sound of singing, and was now helping to block up the door-way, just behind Mrs. Shafto, "Every lady her own Philomel! Vide Advertisements in newspapers."

The benevolent Mrs. Shafto turned upon him with a gracious smile, and a glance expressive of approbation. "Mr. Sawbridge, may I beg you will have the goodness to ask for my carriage? Miss Shafto, my love, Sir Thomas Butterby will be so obliging as inquire for your shawl. Major Stanhope, I believe you belong to us. Augusta, my dear,—Matilda, dearest!" The tender mother had her whole brood under the maternal wing in two minutes.

When Mrs. Shafto arose, could Mrs. Meredith sit? A large glass of delicious Cup was left unfinished, while Mrs. Meredith, with repeated bends and servile speeches, stood curtsying out her *Great Lady*.

Mrs. Shafto's civilities would have honoured a French diplomatist. She was civilier than Lord Chesterfield himself; so marking the vast distinction of degree between herself and the person she addressed: she condescended to murmur some questions about certain loads of fire-wood; whether they appeared punctually—were of the right quality, quantity, &c. I must do her the justice to say, in so low a voice, that but for the audible responses of Mrs. Meredith, (proud of her patroness's favours,) not one of the bystanders could have guessed the exact nature of these mysterious whisperings.

The expected answers obtained, and another poi-

oned arrow shot, therefore, at Miss O'Hara's *airs of consequence*, the elegant mistress of Shafto Place finally disappeared; handed out by that very Mr. Sawbridge who had ridiculed her so unmercifully, but whose vanity could not resist her flattering glance, after his last miserable joke.

Honorias proud spirit, meanwhile, was inwardly champing the bit. She longed to tell Mrs. Meredith how shamefully she was degrading her husband and herself, from that respectable station to which he was entitled by birth, breeding, and sacred calling, and which she might demand in quality of his wife. But to speak without the purpose either of pleasing, persuading, consoling, or commending, was not in Honorias character. She never wanted to provoke, not even to vent temporary spleen. Conscious that on this, as on other occasions, Mrs. Meredith could only be provoked, and was quite incapable of listening to, or profiting by, reason, she curbed her indignant impulse, and merely looking down, prepared to follow her disagreeable chaperon in the duty of wishing Sir Everard and Mrs. Fothergill good night.

Perfectly self-assured, Mr. Frazer hastened after them, with blunt forwardness: his very ignorance of women's characters making him rash in his conclusions upon their conduct. "I take care of Miss O'Hara down stairs," he said, casting on those round him a glance between triumph and defiance. "Depend on it, Miss O'Hara," he added, with hardy frankness, though in a lowered voice, "that I shall not easily give up even half an hour's right to this pretty little hand."

Honorias endeavoured quietly to withdraw her arm from his, over which he had drawn it; but he grasped the hand he spoke of, and that so firmly, that she could not disengage herself without a struggle. She was obliged, therefore, to submit. The appearance of Sir Everard and of Mrs. Fothergill in the room whence they were going to seek them, promised a quicker termination of Honorias thralldom. "That good lady before us," the Laird asked, "she that is speaking to

the Baronet, is only your uncle's wife ! not your blood relation ?"

"Only my uncle's wife," answered Honoria, dryly.

"Yes, yes ; I thought so—I was sure of it," Mr. Frazer rejoined. "Then I don't care a gowan for her ! And where did you learn that charming song of my country ? I assure you——"

Honoria interrupted his assurance by replying, "In my country, Mr. Frazer ; it was the last song I learnt there, so it was naturally the first in my thoughts. I owe no compliment to *your* country ; she uses mine basely ! She makes a foray upon our music, carries off the sweetest airs, then passes them on England as her own. I am quite sure the 'Banks and braes o' bonnie Doon' is an Irish air. I will maintain the superior antiquity and beauty of our music over yours."

The Laird of Dunraven's spirit of controversy and disputation was roused ; it was too strong for infant love. The shade which had fallen over his brow when Honoria pointedly accounted for her choice of a Scottish song, suddenly cleared off, while preparing himself for combat, with "a voice loud and spritful as the trumpet of the challenger," he called upon some one of the gentlemen present to take up the gauntlet, and enter the lists for the lady.

"Behold the champion of Scotland !" he exclaimed, with a vivacity and ardour not ungraceful, though pronounced in rather too declamatory a tone. "Who stands forth for the accuser?"

Four or five gallant voices were heard at once, proffering aid to the feeble side, though professing total ignorance of the nature or merits of the cause. Among these was not Fitz Arthur: a sad stillness of the heart had seized him,—all seemed over. This temerity of Mr. Frazer's spoke of certainty in his views upon Honoria. He could not surely risk opposition to her opinions, had he not assured himself, that she would be pleased with a public display of his talents and information. Fitz Arthur smothered a sigh or two, and drew back. Mr. Frazer found a serious opponent: a young man.

whom no one hitherto had noticed after the first introductory civilities, except those who brought him to Arthur's Court.

This person had neither danced, played cards, flirted, nor grouped with the other men; he had moved noiselessly about the room, as little regarded as a cat in a garden; and having a large green shade over his eyes, and being besides rather slovenly dressed, failed to attract the attention of the ladies. It was the more noble in him, to buckle on his armour in Miss O'Hara's quarrel.

Honorina, however, more distressed than grateful, looked round for Captain Fitz Arthur. "Only let me run away from this battle before it begins," she exclaimed, all confusion, yet trying to treat it lightly. Fitz Arthur had hold of her hand the next moment; he was all warm life again. Honorina's heart must have turned to him for protection,—he would not *think* so,—he could but *feel*, that it had.

With a cheek of fire, eyes that dared not trust themselves with looking on her, lest they should betray this brief transport, and respiration short and fluttering, he hurried her through the door-way, followed by the clamorous "Stop, Stop!" of Mrs. Meredith, who though eager to avoid the threatening disputation, chose to be taken as good care of as her husband's niece.

Meanwhile the two mortal combatants set their lances in their rests, and *addressed* themselves in good earnest to fight. One important feature, however, was wanting in this mimic combat, to give spirit to both, or at least to one, of the knights, the presence of the lady for whom it was undertaken. This accident at first disconcerted Mr. Frazer; but quickly recollecting, that his beautiful mistress was at the mercy of her chaperon, he accounted for her desertion of the field in no unflattering way, and betook himself, of course, to win a brighter flame for her approval.

The astonished Laird of Dunraven soon found he was measuring weapons with as resolute a knight as himself, and in one better skilled in the arts of attack and de-

fence. Proofs, quotations, illustrations, all the missiles of antiquarianism, poured upon him like hail :—head, back, breast were battered. The obscure knight wielded so trenchant a faulchion, and laid it on so unsparingly, yet so gallantly, that his annoyed antagonist, after a long struggle, though disdaining to allow himself conquered, was obliged to admit that his strength was exhausted, and that he must be permitted therefore to breathe awhile.

Captain Fitz Arthur, who had returned to the room immediately after seeing Honoria into her uncle's hack chaise, now interposed. "Most of us here being 'men of the north countrie,'" he said, with benevolent concern for his rival's discomfiture, "are too much interested in our champion's success not to wish *his* plume to triumph ; but as we must all be admirers of Miss O'Hara, we cannot desire to see *her* knight on the knee ; I shall therefore advise my father to use his prerogative, and break down the lists."

The gentleman with the great green shade bowed gravely in token of assent : and, the tilting ended, seemed at once to retire into himself again : but Mr. Frazer awkwardly clamoured for a promise of renewing the combat, when both combatants might have had time to provide themselves with fresh arms. The knight of the shamrock answered evasively, yet courteously.

Sir Everard who had followed his son's counsel, and *dismissed the field* with some humour, followed it up, by shaking the unknown gentleman by the hand very cordially, saying, "Thank you, thank you, my good young sir, for the great treat you and Mr. Frazer have given us. I have not heard such excellent wrangling since I left Trinity. I shall be heartily glad to see you again if you remain in this part of the world. I crave your pardon, sir, but the honour of your name, if you please. I am getting a little deaf. I really did not catch it, when Mr. Charles Raby did us the favour of introducing you."

"Gubbins,—Mr. Peter Gubbins !" hastily called out

young Raby, from another end of the room, answering for his friend. "By the way, Gubbins, our chaise has been waiting this hour."

The person addressed made a rapid bow all round, without trusting himself to speak; and getting away as fast as he could, Captain Fitz Arthur heard such a burst of laughter, immediately follow the closing of the door, that he guessed the reason of the stranger's silence, and precipitate retreat, must be to cover some jest played off upon his father. The laughter, however, was distinctly only from Mr. Raby. Fitz Arthur was neither a cholic, nor a petulant man, yet he felt an emotion of displeasure at this unseasonable mirth. If it were in ridicule of his father's old-fashioned hospitality, it must be apologized for; if in elation of the success of some trick, or some bet, it ought to be explained satisfactorily. He followed, with the intention of obtaining an amicable explanation; but the offenders were too quick for him: they had been driven off the instant before, by four horses, seemingly as mad with spirits as themselves, and to follow them, would be making too serious an affair of what after all might be merely the laugh due to some previous jest, unconnected with him or his. He returned, therefore, without observation to the party he had left, and having exchanged with them a few remarks, upon "that devilish clever young fellow," as Mr. Frazer called the stranger, "only so over-keen, that he did not give his adversary the fair play of time to think;" the company departed,—tables were cleared,—lights extinguished;—and, one by one, masters and servants took up their solitary candle:—one by one, doors were heard to shut,—voices and steps to cease. In another half hour, there was not a single creature moving or awake in the old mansion,—save only Delaval Fitz Arthur. He was in bed certainly; but Honoria "had murdered" his sleep. And alternately thrilling with a hope, inspired by her last act of the evening; then sinking at the recollection of her evident interest in Mr. Frazer's conversation; and lastly, convincing himself that, circumstanced as

he was, to think of such a wife was criminal, he wore out the few remaining hours of the night.

CHAPTER IV.

WHILST the inhabitants of Arthur's Court were clearing away the decorations of "feast and floor," Honoria and her aunt were rattling home in their hack post-chaise: the latter scolding the driver all the way (not without reason,) for having put wet straw at the bottom of the vehicle, instead of a bit of old carpet,—scolding the very moon for not shining,—and rating Honoria for having no *more manners than a bear, looking at and noticing Mrs. Shafto so cavalierly.*

Not even the jingle of a hack chaise, with all its appurtenances of loosened window-frames, shaking doors and steps, and clattering-hoofed horses,—not even its joltings over ruts with their edges sharpened by frost, could drown the angry clamour of Mrs. Meredith.—Honoria hoped in vain that these increased joltings, when they got upon the worst part of the road, would at least suffocate some tones of that discordant voice; but a sinner might as reasonably have hoped to smother the cries of conscience. In vain did our heroine maintain with equal temper and firmness the dignity of her blood, as an O'Hara and a Meredith of the West Riding; her uncle's wife was bent upon groveling in the dust, at what she deemed a high superior's feet, for the sake of securing more means to dazzle an inferior's eyes.

Every one's integrity, it has been said, has its price. Now, if Mr. Peter Gubbins would enter the lists for me, I would combat that argument with any one, for the sake of poor human nature: but my own unassisted strength retreats.

I must acknowledge that the axiom was true in Mrs.

Meredith's cause : she would have bartered her husband's respectability, and her own independence, at any moment for a lace cap, or a new pelisse. The fuel and butter from Shafto Place had already gone half way towards securing a gown of the richest maroon velvet.—How then could Mrs. Meredith fail to be the eternal laureate of Mrs. Shafto ?

She now with more than her usual venom, contrasted her great lady's munificence with "the shameful shabbiness of her husband's brother in India : who had never, no not all the years she had been married to his brother, never sent her a single present ; not till Miss Honor, forsooth, was come to have bed and board under her roof. This was a relation indeed, to be proud of ! For her part she did not give much credit to the rank and riches of far-away folk. Mr. John Meredith might have his letters directed to the Honourable J. Meredith, Chief Justice, Privy Councillor, &c., and yet have no right to the title. For her part she wished she saw substantial proofs of his wealth. Mr. Meredith had never been the better of a guinea of his money : and never had any thing from him except a heap of old rubbish of coins and stones, and carvings and books, that he made presents of himself, she supposed by way of getting rid of them."

Honoraria was in duty bound to repeat some of her Edenfell uncle's explanations in defence of his brother. The former professed himself satisfied with his income—he had no children—his widow would have a provision at his death from a Life Insurance Company, to which he paid annually for that purpose—and he neither wished nor wanted to incur pecuniary obligations needlessly even to a brother. Mrs. Meredith ought to remember, that the judge's situation in India was more honourable than lucrative, that it called for an expensive style of living—that besides, he had not enjoyed it many years—that he believed, upon the faith of his brother, that his nearest relations were in easy though plain circumstances, and that consequently he never dreamed of transmitting them money—that he was now married and to a woman full twenty-five years younger than

himself, likely to bring him a large family. Still, however, he *had* been kind, he had been generous—he had invited Honoria to go and live with them—and he had twice sent over a box of such India manufactures as English ladies are known to prize.

The *woven-air* in which Honoria was dressed that evening—the Cachemire shawl in which she was wrapped—the fine cornelians on the person of Mrs. Meredith, were no inconsiderable proofs of her distant uncle's liberality when proper offerings were suggested to him, by his liberal young wife.

This unfortunate eulogium drew down a torrent of reproaches upon Honoria herself, for her folly and obstinacy in refusing to accept the proposal of taking her, made by the judge's lady. If her uncle were such a great man, and his wife so wonderfully kind, why did not she go out to them and marry one of their Bengal nabobs?

Honoria now could only remain silent. She knew Mrs. Meredith would scoff at every one of those delicate and affectionate feelings, which had been met, with the tenderest sympathy and approval by her uncle the clergyman: and which had she not felt, Honoria would have loathed herself.

She had a home, uncomfortable as it was;—she had an income sufficient for a single woman's frugal maintenance in the north;—above all, she had an uncle to whose happiness she even believed herself essential. Thus circumstanced, neither the prospect of splendour, nor the offered kindness of unknown relatives, could tempt her to leave Edenfell.

Luckily for her at this moment Edenfell was in sight. Mrs. Meredith lashed herself into such a fury at her companion's silence, that when the chaise stopt at the gate, she was well-nigh choaked; and ere she could recover, or begin bargaining away the postboy's right to an extra half-a-crown for going twice to Arthur's Court, Honoria flew past her, and gained the sanctuary of her own room.

Having a second sight of a visit from Mr. Frazer.

Honorina hastened directly after breakfast the next day to Hazeldean, where she fell in with many of the party she had danced among the evening before.

Mrs. Preston, good-humoured, cheerful, and hospitable, gave a welcome to every one. She and her daughters were always well, happy, and kindly; their house, therefore, was always pleasant. Their roses were always earlier in blow—and their fruits sooner ripe than any other person's: their very cows seemed of a liberal temper; for if cream and syllabub were to be had no where else, they were sure to be found at Mrs. Preston's. In hot weather, all the ordinary morning, a table under the shade of trees, or in winter within the sphere of a cheering fire, was set out with refreshments adapted to different tastes and appetites,—and perfect freedom allowed the visitors to walk into the house, or stay without, talk, or be silent. This freedom and hospitality made Mrs. Preston's cheerful little residence the lounge of all the idlers, the rendezvous of all the social, and the home of all the affectionate, in and about Edenfell.

After the Arthur's Court ball, of course, there was a greater gathering than usual at Hazeldean; and a quicker consumption of Mrs. Preston's *bœuf pendu*, as Miss Bella called it, cheese-cakes and made wines (the only wine she allowed herself thus to "*set at flow*."") The incidents of the ball were recapitulated—beauties criticised—dresses quizzed—a little harmless gossip indulged in—and each individual's particular adventures recounted dully or amusingly. Every incident sunk into insignificance compared with the description of Mr. Frazer's discomfiture. At first, the details of this singular occurrence were given with extreme reserve, by such of the ball-goers as had previously observed the Laird's undisguised admiration of Miss O'Hara; but on her eager questioning, and genuine enjoyment of the scene, though imperfectly described, the describers grew bolder, and some youthful laughter at the learned Highlander's expense was the consequence.

In the midst of their mirth Captain Fitz Arthur was

announced. His entrance appeased the storm, and the subject was soon treated in its worthiest way.

The surprising talents of Mr. Frazer's much younger antagonist were dwelt upon by Captain Fitz Arthur with unfeigned admiration. Such of Mrs. Preston's party as had heard the debate, and were qualified to estimate its merits, joined him in eulogium. Miss Preston, however, clamoured loudly against the stranger's "*horrid nom de batiste*;" though admitting his "*grand talon*!" then renewed her recommendation of the "*bœuf pendu*;" complacently adding, "*J'ai mangé un bouchon*, and find it excellent: pray follow my example!"

Every person present looked at the moment as though they had literally taken her advice; and half-choaking, tried to smother their laughter, by simultaneous inquiries of who Mr. Gubbins was.

Captain Fitz Arthur could only answer, that an invitation having gone to Raby Hall, and none of the family being there, except the young templar, he had come over presenting this gentleman, whom Fitz Arthur remembered he said he was going off with, the next day to Edinburgh.

All source of further information was therefore stopped for the present; and the impatient Northumbrians must wait for Mr. Charles Raby's return, ere their curiosity could hope for gratification.

By the time that Fitz Arthur, with a talent little inferior to what he was describing, had faithfully *reported* the arguments of Mr. Gubbins, repeating them in terser language,—by the time he had shown that gentleman's array of brilliant figures, felicitous analogies, and decisive conclusions,—showing too, how they bore down the less orderly and less splendid ranks of his opponent—Honorina was almost in love with her knight of the shamrock.

She idolized genius; she loved dear, trodden-down Ireland, as her thoughts often called it; and she was ready to kiss the hand that helped to raise her country from the dust. The little mysteriousness, also, that

there was in Mr. Gubbins's entrance and exit from Arthur's Court—the odd, back-ground figure he had chosen to play there, till the moment of leaving it—and, above all, his having cast aside this under-character for her sake, were so many incitements to curiosity and calls upon interest.

The old leaven of early romance began to work in her. She recollected, with secret pleasure, that on the evening before, when she was accidentally passing a table where this gentleman was hastily swallowing some tea, his green shade had fallen down, and though in catching it in the act of falling, his hand covered the lower part of his face, she had observed a forehead like Parian marble, and eyebrows of the blackest and finest marking. She remembered the circumstance had struck her, simply from the discordance of these brows with his hair, which was of a dull ash-colour. Memory had almost unconsciously registered such observation. But his name was not romantic. Peter was actually un-loveable! Gubbins was dreadful! Yet stay—it was something in Ireland:—it was the name of one distinguished family there. If, then, this eloquent defender of her country were her countryman also, how could she fail to fall most imaginatively in love with him?

She now took a very lively share in the conversation, joining finally in the opinion, that Mr. Gubbins, from his shining talents, must be studying for the bar. His appearance in company with a templar had suggested the idea.

“Whatever he may be,” Captain Fitz Arthur concluded, in his usual spirit of amiable remark, “he is obviously a gentleman of the first class. Our over-eager friend, the Laird of Dunraven, seemed a little—” clownish beside him, Fitz Arthur would have said; but checking himself for Miss O'Hara's sake, he added hesitatingly—“a little too vehement, with so courteous an antagonist.”

Mr. Frazer's name producing some inquiries about him, produced also the information of his having just

left the Rectory, and being now on his way to Hazeldean, where he talked of calling after he had been to a good humoured friend's, where he expected to obtain some harp-strings for his Æolian lyre. Honoria discovered that Mr. Frazer was on horseback: the bridle road was much more circuitous than the foot-way to Hazeldean; she was just in time to avoid him. Captain Fitz Arthur heard her whisper to Miss Bella (for your lovers are particularly endued with the faculty of hearing upon certain occasions,) that she begged she would not notice her disappearance, as she must slip away for dinner at home. Bella, in return, smilingly accused her of having made an *assignat*: Fitz Arthur smiled too, while ringing for his horse. Ere it was announced, Honoria vanished.

After ascertaining her stealthy departure, Fitz Arthur with a *ruse* pardonable in a lover and a soldier, rode off full speed, in full sight of all at Hazeldean; then, when completely out of view, dismounted as hastily, and bidding his groom ride on with the horses to the Fitz Arthur Arms, and wait him there, struck into the fields, where leaping ditches, and vaulting over gates, he startled Honoria by suddenly alighting before her from the opposite side of a hedge, as though he had dropped from the sky.

The little cry she uttered, and the rich crimson that instantaneously spread her face and neck, were too evidently from surprise: there was no confusion in her eyes as she turned them with pleased and thankful expression upon Fitz Arthur. He, meanwhile, with the proper cowardice of a lover, was apologizing for the fright he had thrown her into, pleading, in excuse, some unimportant message from Mrs. Fothergill which he had forgotten to deliver, and just hinting at his fear of letting her walk home unprotected.

"O you must not make me afraid of rambling about by myself. I admit that it is not quite safe when the gipsies are about; perhaps you think not quite right in a young lady;—(Honoria's smile had enchantment in it; for it seemed to own faultiness by its attempt to win

indulgence;)"—"but I was bred a wild thing. Free air and liberty are my life and soul. We have neither carriage, nor lady's horse, nor lady's page at the Rectory—nay, not even a garden with one gravel walk for trailing up and down in, by way of looking abroad on nature. My uncle is not always in the idle humour to admit me into his study; and the rooms below are, I may whisper it to *you*, not particularly to my taste, in any way; so what am I to do? e'en set a stout heart and face upon it—determine to believe nobody will harm me, or, what is more to the purpose, suspect me of harm,—and so go on vagabondizing by myself. Do you know, I really think there are more scrapes to be got into, in a room full of well-dressed, well-behaved, civilized people, like all of you at Arthur's Court last night, than among hedges and ditches."

"What scrape could Miss O'Hara get into at Arthur's Court?" gently asked Fitz Arthur, wishing to lead her to some of that confidential conversation, which not unfrequently gave him the happy privilege of being useful to her, either by his counsel or his interference.

"I don't know—I——" Honoria looked aside as she spoke: "but I feel uncomfortable with myself. You know, Captain Fitz Arthur, that you have accustomed me to speak to you now and then, as if you were my relation, so shall I honestly own, that I feel that forward Mr. Frazer ought not to have taken it for granted, that I would accept his Æolian harp; he ought not to go parading about the country, inquiring for harp-strings! There, I see your eyes asking me, if I did not mean to accept it. Certainly I did, at the moment he offered it; but afterwards, I resolved otherwise; when I saw him so free and easy, and determined to fancy I thought him clever and agreeable."

"And did you not think him clever and agreeable?" her companion ventured to ask.

"Be quiet, Captain Fitz Arthur;" cried Honoria, with that pretty childishness of manner, which is so captivating, when it mixes up well with sound sense,

and dignity of carriage, upon proper occasions. "You shall not scare me thus at myself. I know you want to convict me of not having been dumb and stiff enough at first." (Fitz Arthur smiled, perhaps assentingly.) "Well!—you don't look very merciless,—so I will be magnanimous, and confess I *was* to blame. I am so apt to hearken to a clever person talking, with such a thirst for every thing they say, or can say, that I quite forget they are a living thing and not a book. Well, I won't do so again if I can help it: not even if that wonderful Mr. Gubbins be the volume in hand. Only tell me, dear Captain Fitz Arthur, I charge you, tell me with a true friend's sincerity—with as much honesty as if you were my brother—if I *deserved* that Mr. Frazer should make so sure I would accept his harp, and be gratified by his telling me that he did not regard my unpleasant aunt a *gowan*?"

The person Honoria addressed, no longer heard even her. He was lost! That thrilling "*dear* Captain Fitz Arthur," had undone him. He knew not where he was, what he was doing, or what he meant to say. He forgot that he had resolved long ago, never to think of the portionless Honoria as a wife. I fear he had quite forgotten it for the last eight and forty hours.

The extreme disorder of his looks confounded Honoria; she felt with woman's instinct that he was on the point of making her a declaration of love: and solicitous to save herself the pain of paining him, she hastened to check the flow of his feelings, by precipitately adding, "I have a dreadfully proud heart, I fear! For that coarse expression of Mr. Frazer's appeared such an air of superiority, that I can never have a cordial intimacy with him; he is now, and always will be, only a clever person of my acquaintance. It was unpardonable in a Highlander, who knows the superiority of blood even over title. The O'Haras might be considered equal to the Frazers, I think."

Our heroine purposely heightened the offended expression of her voice, to prevent Captain Fitz Arthur from imagining her averseness to the Laird had any

thing to do with a preference for himself. A lover is more easily scared than a house-breaker: Fitz Arthur recovered self-possession, with his comfortably habitual notion of being nothing to Miss O'Hara: and he answered her, therefore, with a calm sincerity which will perhaps pique many of my fair readers' laudable *esprit du corps*, far more than it did the vanity of Honoria herself. "If I thought there were one spark of coquetry in your nature, my dear Miss O'Hara," he said, manfully mastering a sigh, "I should know it was vain to plead for indulgence to Mr. Frazer: your own little faultiness would make you jealous of any apology for his self-satisfaction. But I am sure you erred unconsciously; and therefore, I am hardy enough to tell you, that he ought not to be given over to utter reprobation."

"And why not?"

"First, take into consideration his station—his fortune—his habits of life—and his quick open character—these will account for his being easily *assurable*. (May I make a word?) on the score of his acceptableness, in every way." (Fitz Arthur stammered a little.) "Surely, it is not to the discredit of a man's heart that he is quickly convinced of his fellow creature's goodwill? Next, call to mind the train of pleasant accidents which helped to raise his spirits into exultation. Recollect, Miss O'Hara, he first *observed you observing him*."

Honoria's cheeks out-damasked the rose at that moment—her eyes fell under their long lashes—and Fitz Arthur fancied that more than the shaded light of those eyes, was glittering through the lashes, and shining like dew upon her blushes.

"Must I go on?" he asked repentingly; "it will be cruel to go on. No,—no,—I cannot go on." "Do,—do,—Captain Fitz Arthur," exclaimed Honoria with fervent earnestness. She almost took his hand: she did rest her hand upon his arm a single instant, while arresting his movement to turn away. "I want the

truth, however I may wince: tell me the truth as you would tell it to a sister."

"Well, then—may I venture to say, that to detect a young lady, listening with deep interest to any discourse not addressed to herself, nor about herself, is so uncommon a thing, that I don't know the man who could resist the temptation of laying a flattering unctiousness to his soul in consequence."

"O, you hard-judging person!" exclaimed Honoria, desperately mustering all her vivacity to her assistance: "to give it against me, merely for sitting hearkening for ten minutes to a great ill-looking Scotchman, with a loud stamping voice, that I had never looked at or listened to before. Certes, you lords of the creation are more blessedly to be cheated into a good opinion of yourselves than we your slaves, when such poor oblations as these can win you to think yourselves Apollos!"

"You may make yourself as amusing and charming as you please, Miss O'Hara!" replied Captain Fitz Arthur, his whole soul dissolving in his eyes, as they involuntarily turned and fondly hung upon her; "I shall go on doing my duty, at least so long as you allow me the privilege of calling myself your friend. I have not yet done my catalogue of Mr. Frazer's apologies. You danced with him immediately afterwards: that was a matter of course, so not to be dwelt upon. But he talked again, and talked so well, that he moved your sensibility to a degree which forced you to retire and recover yourself. To start a tear of softness in a woman's eye!—Miss O'Hara, I appeal to your own observation of human nature, if the certainty of having done so, by his eloquence or his sympathy, was not enough to injure the sanity of a man's opinion of himself?—Then the song you chose——"

"O, no more! no more!" interrupted Honoria, putting her hands over her face: "you will quite overwhelm me. I see I must never eves-drop any more, though Shakspeare's ghost were holding forth; and I

must always think before I sing, as well as before I speak. Alas! is not that very hard?"

"You do not think lightly of what I have said, for all this playfulness," said Captain Fitz Arthur, regarding her with the tenderest, fondest longing to catch and hold her to his heart for ever. "You want no knowledge, my dear Miss O'Hara, to fit you for making the happiness of yourself and all around you, except knowledge of the world: as that grows upon you, you will learn the disagreeable necessity of being always vigilant in society, and measuring your degree of unreservedness by your degree of intimacy with your company. Mr. Frazer's fault, in my opinion, has been want of capacity to discover that you are not a person to be judged by those rules which suit young ladies educated after the same pattern. He *should* have made the discovery the moment he had recommended you to go and hear the nightingale in the South of France."

"Why, what did I say upon that so extraordinary?" exclaimed Honoria, sincerely surprised, and afraid she had committed some distressing blunder. "What could I have said?"

"Why, you neither coloured up, nor looked down; neither frowned nor smiled; in short, you evidently had not found out by his tone and the faces of the company, that Mr. Frazer is himself going to the South of France in Spring."

Honoria could not misunderstand Captain Fitz Arthur; his embarrassed eyes and voice were commentaries on his words; she saw at once what he fancied Mr. Frazer had meant to imply, and her cheeks blazed again.

"In our mothers' childish days," Fitz Arthur resumed hastily, "I believe the nursery talk used to be of ghosts; now it seems to be of proposals; and young ladies are instructed to expect an offer of marriage under every dark compliment; relations step forth to ask the gentleman what he means, as regularly as divines were formerly summoned to exorcise an apparition. In

short, society is haunted by the heartless spirit of establishment."

"Well! and do you mean to recommend my adoption of such ridiculous fancies as you have just described?" asked Honoria, a little archly. "Take care, Captain Fitz Arthur, you are beginning to argue against yourself."

Fitz Arthur had certainly confused himself by his haste to relieve her from confusion; and he was therefore more embarrassed as he replied,—“No! no! indeed. I merely meant to describe opinions so different from yours, producing such a different effect upon young ladies' manners, as might bear out my position of Mr. Frazer's being censureable for not discovering that you were not to be judged by the modish laws. I have before proved to my own satisfaction, if not to yours,” he added smiling apprehensively, “that you were guilty of a want of worldly knowledge; that each of you have had your unintentional share in producing that *heinous* exhilaration in the poor Laird which has offended you so much. Is it not fair then that you should forgive *him*? and when he comes and complains to me of your refusing his hand—which you will do if he offers it too soon—I will show him he had no right to expect you would accept it.”

“Captain Fitz Arthur!” exclaimed Honoria, breaking in upon his last awkward attempt at sportive carelessness, “you think then, that if it is not done too soon—really, I am very much obliged to you for thinking so highly of my taste.”

Her tone of good humoured resentment was not unmarked by Fitz Arthur; it bore the evidence of sincerity: but it was only her taste she vindicated. Not a shade, not a softened turn of countenance whispered anything about her heart. His heart fell all at once, a dead weight within him.

“Now, don't you deserve that I should be half inclined to beat you?” asked our heroine, with one of her most bewitching looks: “you find fault with young ladies, taught to do so, for believing too soon in their

conquests ; and you are grave with me, because I did not, upon six hours' acquaintance, nay, during the first six minutes of my conversation with the Laird of Dunraven, hedge myself round with all sorts of cautions and cares to keep off a proposal,—as I suppose you would call it ! Can you really think I am so silly as to imagine the good man had taken a fancy to me, and a fancy too that he would be thankfully accepted ? —To tell you the truth, I thought something worse—no, not worse, but full *as* mortifying ; I thought, from that insolent remark of his, about not caring a gowan for Mrs. Meredith, that he considered his mere notice of the minister and his niece an honour to them ; such an honour, that he might say unceremoniously whatever came uppermost about their connexions. And if any thing that I said had given warrant to such impertinence, I confess it would humble me for the rest of my life."

"Do not injure yourself, do not humiliate yourself now, by such an idea!" exclaimed Fitz Arthur, his manly features suffused with generous feelings. "Frazer ought not to have thought aloud ; at least, he had better have let all the rest of his thoughts, have followed the expression of this unlucky one. If ever I saw a man suddenly and irresistibly struck, he was by you.—Pray pardon my bluntness, Miss O'Hara. And surely, with a serious object in view, after having heard the many ill-natured, unjustifiable—I don't know what fit title to give to Mrs. Shafto's obvious envy—poor Frazer might be allowed to start at first. Afterwards he disdained, you see——"

Fitz Arthur was stumbling more and more over his ill-arranged ideas and expressions ; Honoria felt for this embarrassment, his own relative being now a sharer in the animadversions ; she rallied him all at once, by exclaiming, "By the way, my friend, how came you to know all that I said and Mr. Frazer said, from the moment we were introduced to each other? Why, you are worse than a familiar of the Inquisition !"

Never was there a less happy attempt at ridding a

man of embarrassment. Captain Fitz Arthur's face was died with crimson: nothing but pleading a lover's interest in all her actions, could extenuate *his* impertinence, he thought. Honoria was immediately sensible of the mischief she had heedlessly brought upon herself, and her face became colourless with apprehension.

At this critical instant they were both relieved by the appearance of Mrs. Meredith, issuing from the very back gate by which the walkers were about to enter. Having thrown open this gate, with what housemaids call a *slam*, its force nearly flattened poor Fitz Arthur, who was, however, so closely imprisoned by the sudden action, between that and the wall, as to remain for some time an unwilling listener to what ensued.

Never before had Captain Fitz Arthur been so edified by a shrew's oratory. The current of every man's life appears to have its own particular adornments or deformities. If the stream of Fitz Arthur's had been often troubled, it was not by the tempers of those around him: his trials had other sources. He now listened with astonishment to the violence of Mrs. Meredith.

Miss O'Hara was saluted with a torrent of invective, from which he learned that "dinner at the Rectory had been put back in consequence of Mr. Frazer's visit, and Captain Fitz Arthur's visit; and then that Miss O'Hara had kept it waiting half an hour longer; and before they had got it over without her, Mr. Edmund Chaplin had come in for early tea; and the dinner wasn't fit for a Christian to eat; the pickled pork was boiled to a jelly: though she *dare say'd*, that if Miss Honor *had* been at home, she would have served her as she always did, when they had good wholesome pork—given herself airs, and eat bread and butter: but that she must tell her, once for all, she had better take what she could get, and be thankful, for there wasn't one of those men that were coming after her, and making her fancy herself a beauty, that meant her any good—they were all too great gentlemen to think of her as a wife; all but Mr. Edmund Chaplin; and him she chose to turn up her nose at; but she had best take care of

herself, or she would be going a gray gait in a misty morning, like Bell Foster, the *set-up* girl before her."

Such an harangue was too much for the heart, the previously agitated heart of Honoria to bear with her usual calmness. She burst into tears, as Mrs. Meredith jerked her violently forward by one arm, exclaiming in a low sobbing voice, "O ma'am, Captain Fitz Arthur hears you!" Her action pointed to the door, behind which she had seen him forced by the violent way in which it was opened.

Mrs. Meredith stood petrified; then desperately stepping out, pulled the dreaded door aside. Fitz Arthur was gone. Whether he had adroitly extricated himself during the harangue, or during the moment's suspension of it—how much, or how little he had heard, remains unknown; suffice it, he had disappeared, and not even a rustling of the bushes covering the angle of the wall betrayed his recent flight.

Honoria was so relieved by this flight, and so grateful for it, that she now bore with more than patience, with apologizing sweetness, Mrs. Meredith's increased wrath, at suspecting she had been tricked out of full five minutes' scolding by a feint of her niece's. She maintained that Captain Fitz Arthur had not been behind the door; and bade her go in and say her prayers, and think what was to be the portion of—really, it is impossible to pen down the strong term she used—in the world to come!

Honoria perhaps thought at the instant her aunt could never think of that world. To have uttered her thoughts would have been dropping oil on fire; so she glided silently away in search of her constant resources on similar occasions—Hetty Macready and the brown loaf.

Honoria was like Daniel and his companions; she could feed on pulse and water, and have as fair a face as those that fared sumptuously. While she was eating this wholesome food with unromantic appetite, in spite of foregone agitation and mortification, Hetty Macready found full scope for her fond eloquence.

"Och! and its who but you, Miss Honor! show me the face to *pit* against you; and the manner *on* you; and the *pritty* ways, and the *illigant brading*!—Sorrow to me, if I know where to choose for you, darling!"

"Choose! what for me, Hetty?" asked our heroine, humouring her nurse rather than herself, by thus giving her an opening to speak of her conquests.

"Why, what should I choose but a good husband for you, jewel? *Fait*, and they're to be had for picking up just now; and would I be the king in your way, rosebud? och, and I wouldn't."

Honorina laughed. "Just be so good as not laugh, Miss Honor," continued Hetty, drawing up what had once been a rounded slender throat, now, alas! thin and stringy: "haven't I felt the *tinder* passion myself? and don't I know what it is? and an't I sure his majesty came out of the same churn with his subjects?—God bless him!—and just as sure to fall straight in love with you, if he saw you, as all the *oder gintlemen* here.—Bad luck to him if he didn't! say I."

"Hetty! Hetty! you are speaking treason!" exclaimed Honorina. "But what can have happened to make you run on in this manner?"

"What has happened, darling?" repeated Hetty, brightening up. "Why, hasn't there been a new lover here, *the morn*; and didn't I see the Captain (so she always called Fitz Arthur) take a leap like a young salmon straight down into the *middows*, just as you came in, honey? I warrant me, he was timersome of the rory-tory mistress here. And hasn't there been that beggarly bogtrotter, Mr. Edmund Chaplin, riding a *baste* I long to *bate*, only *jist becasse* he rides him? and don't I know there wasn't a *sowl* worth saving at the ball, not a young *ginilemen* worth a *rap*, that didn't go mad for you?—Och, botheration! don't tell me, Miss Honor, that you mayn't have the king if you like him!—*Fait*, and I don't know a better *gintleman*, barring his *childer* and his wife. To be sure, her majesty being above ground is a small *objiction*; else I'd give you to him with all the *plisure* in life.—*Howiver*, God bless the queen, though she does stand in your way, jewel!"

"Ah well, Hetty, I see you will never let me marry, either of the Messrs. Chaplin," observed Honoria, with arch gayety.

"*Fait*, and I'd rather *pit* Paddy's stocking round your beautiful throat, and strangle you, darling!" exclaimed the nurse. "Isn't the youngest one on'em, a stupid *spalpeen* that don't know how to hand you a potato without burning you? That if you tould him to milk the cow, would go milking the jack-ass. An awkward *baste*, not fit to carry garbage to a bear! If I *mate* him in the entry, isn't he sure to tread upon my corns? and did I *ivir* see him open the fore-court gate for you, Miss Honor, that he *did* not *lit* it bang back in your beautiful face? He, the rapsallion! I must beg you won't *mintion* him any more, anyhow."

"But old Mr. Chaplin is getting so rich; his sons will be so rich! Then, there's Mr. Philip Chaplin, the heir. He has a half a mind to me. Don't you think 'had better give him a little encouragement?"

"Ah, now, darling! Ah, now!" cried Hetty, in the coaxing tone peculiar to her country—a tone which the heart cannot resist, because it so often comes from the heart. "Let that ill-looking vagabond alone, and *jist* hear the affront he *pit* upon me, one day. Och, and by the *souls* of my *fader* and my *moder*. and——"

"Hetty, dear Hetty, don't swear."

"Well then, dear, for the *wonst*, *jist* hear how he behaved. As I was a *litting* him out one night, (though it isn't in my place to wait upon a single *cratur* but yourself; only I did it, out of the civil, to Ned, who was gone after his Sunday hat,) he pretends to tip me with a couple of shabby *testers*. There, ould Irish woman,' says he, 'there's a shilling for you, to speak a good word for me to my sweetheart. You know who I mean.' And with that he winks, and jerks his bit of a head like a little cock-sparrow,—the poor *cratur*! 'Free and *aisy*!' says I, 'but let me tell you, Mr. Chaplin, Miss Honor's not for your money; so *plase* to take it back again:' and with that I tosses it at him. 'Och and she's for somebody else then,' says he,—

the blackguard! and off he goes, as if he had said the witty thing and the wise. A dirty rascal!"

"An impertinent coxcomb!" Honoria almost added: but restraining herself, she gave Hetty one of those little lectures upon calling names, and suffering displeasure to degenerate into abuse, which poor Hetty's declamations upon certain subjects too often required.

Conscious of deserving reproof, the nurse bore it with good-natured submission of look and spirit: then burst out, all at once on its conclusion, with—

"See the *differ* now of a *gentleman*! Don't you mind when Captain Fitz Arthur got me to stitch up the sleeve of his coat, when he'd tore it one*day in trying to get a sheep out of a pit, when I come on him in the *mid-dow* in his distress? See if he even offered me the *af-front* of a *thirteener*,—no,—nor twenty on em! *Bliss-ings* on him, life and limb! He knew the Irishwoman's heart. Sure there isn't a greater *plisure* on earth than to do the civil thing, and the kind!"

"Oh, but Hetty," cried Honoria mischievously, "you forget the shawl."

"And *you'd a had* me refuse the shawl, Miss Honor! Hoot-a-toot! Do you know manners? Do you know the *dacent* and the *gintee*? Sorrow come over you, if you've forgot what Mrs. Ally and I *taached* you in Ballygarry! See if I shouldn't have broke the Captain's *knd* heart—and a *kindler niver* warmed waistcoat! 'Mrs. Macready,' says he,—och, and if he did not know my name from the first hour he set his great handsome eyes on me, as if St. Patrick's self had tould him! 'Mrs. Macready,' says he, 'you did my poor shoulder *sitch* a *sarvice*, that its but fit you should let me take care of yours, so you must oblige me by wearing this handkerchief for my *sake*.' Upon which, he whips me out of his great-coat pocket, that beautiful silk shawl from the *Ghinas*; the shawl that Madam Meredith is *jist* ready to cut my throat for, every time she sees it. Och! and had you seen the *rispect* of the *cratur*? With a face like a red turf fire, and his hands trembling like a peat bog!"

"Of course, then, the poor Captain is in love with you, Hetty," rejoined her provoking foster-child.

"Now, Miss Honor!—Miss Honor!—when you know his *affliction* for yourself! *Niver* stept truer lover on shoe-leather. But then he's not an Irishman—och hone! but that's a sorrow."

"And you won't let me marry Captain Fitz Arthur?" asked Honoria with comic gravity.

"*Fait*, and I don't well know what to say," returned the artless nurse, with as much real trouble of look and mind as if Honoria's fate depended at that moment upon her fiat. "I take vastly to the other gentleman that was here, though he is not so well-limbed and handsome, and open-hearted looking, as Captain Fitz Arthur. But wasn't his grandmother a Caldwell of Carrickfergus? And hasn't he been over all the *ould* places of the giants? And doesn't he believe in the *good people*? And hasn't he seen the *banshee* at Shane's Castle? And didn't he ask me if my husband came of the Macreadys of Ballymoney? *Sure* and he did! And what's more, he *minded* him of the big bleach-ground belonging to Mr. Phelim O'Rafferty, my mother's father's third cousin; and he said the blood of the O'Raffertys was as good blood as the Macreadys any day; and that I might hold up my head with the best in Northumberland, barring poverty and serving. And he said you and *him* had been talking of the dear country till you cried, *darling*; and then you *mintioned* me, and so he bethought to ask for me when you didn't come home. And he said you was the *swatest cratur* ever *sapped* sowings, or washed with buttermilk, let who would be the *nixt*."

Honoria could not restrain a burst of hearty laughter at the eloquent phrases attributed to Mr. Frazer: yet conscious that such mirth offended her doting foster-mother, she said more quietly, "Well, Hetty, and how many more gentlemen will you insist upon my marrying! For I see by your tender concern for all that you fancy fancies your child, she must marry a score at least."

"Sure and I *am* sorry for the *craturs* !" returned the honest-hearted Irishwoman. "There's not a *bigger* pain in the world than love let *me* tell you, that's felt it : and so you'll say *wheniver* you see the *gintleman* that's to be your fate, as they call it. Didn't I fall strait in love with Murphy Macready the very moment I clapped sight on him—with his roving step and roving eye?—Sorrow on them ! Those beautiful black eyes *niver* were made for the good of his sowl ! Och !—and many's the heart-ache I had with him, married and single. Miss Honor, dear, *niver* let your fancy run on a man that's lived free. My Murphy had been out with the sodgers, and he could *niver* after that, keep from the ruin of him. Och hone ! Och hone !"

Honor's young heart melted at these tones of sorrow, from lips that had so often lulled her infancy to sleep with fondest hushings. She threw herself upon her foster-mother's breast, repeating in her tenderest accents, "Dear, dear nurse—for all his wanderings, I'm sure your handsome husband loved you dearly."

"Ah, jewel, well may you call him handsome ! *Niver* was carving or *pictur* like him for the beauty of him. Then he could talk like ten dozen of angels ! You see he came first to me to be *fore-speaker* for Dennis Brady, that had a mind to me then ; but instead of that, do you see, *fait* he spoke for himself, *wonst* he had seen *me* and fancied me, wild bit girl as I was ! Och, and was I long of saying him yes !"

Hetty's countenance, which had been saddening as she reverted to her past suffering, from her husband's infidelities, lighted again as the vision of his love and comeliness rose in vivid remembrance. For the moment she was eighteen again, and Murphy Macready in the fashion of rustic wooing, with his arm round her waist as they walked under the trees of Ballygarry. Hetty drew one of those deep and fondly laden sighs, rarely heard after five and twenty, and for a while was fixed by melancholy recollections : then, suddenly dashing away the tears blinding her faded eyes, she exclaimed with the resolute gayety of her country :—

“And what signifies thinking of the days that’s gone, and of them that’s gone, darling? *Pace* to all the *swate souls* on their cold pillows! Och hone! and it’s by the time you are as *ould* as Hetty Macready, you’ll be having some *trisures* in the black church-yard too. I’m thinking I shan’t be sorry to be one of them, darling, since I’ve been *minding* myself of Murphy. *Fait*, and one’s happy but the whiles, after one has seen the shroud and the sod put over them we love.” The tears ran down the poor widow’s cheeks as she spoke, though she smiled too, as Honoria pressed her in her arms, with cheeks as wet as her own.

Honoria could not speak, through sympathy, and natural shrinking from the sure sorrows of coming years; but Hetty Macready bravely rallying her own spirits, and kissing her foster-child’s smooth brow, cried out,—

“Now long life to all above ground yet, and may you all survive one another!”

This ludicrous bull caused an instant change in the feelings and thoughts of both; for Honoria was seized with a fit of uncontrollable laughter; which, explained to her good-humoured nurse, made her also give way to sudden mirth; after which, our heroine soon found an opportunity of dismissing her to that active employment which was always necessary when poor Hetty had been recalling the life and death of her dissipated husband.

Honoria left alone, was left to think of Captain Fitz Arthur principally: to be heartily sorry that he certainly seemed to like her so much better than she desired,—to acknowledge the good sense and good feeling of all he had said to her—to resolve to profit by it,—and then to let her fancy run upon the little mystery of her knight of the shamrock.

CHAPTER V.

CAPTAIN Fitz Arthur was obliged to Mrs. Shafto for his riddance of one rival; Major Stanhope drove from Shafto Place full speed in his tandem, even at the risk of breaking his neck while turning a corner. He went thus hastily, it must be owned, not to fly Miss O'Hara, but the whole file of Misses Shafto, who were forming into a compact body against him.

Providing for the possible failure of her elder girls, the able mother contrived that the sight-seeing party should meet her two youngest daughters walking through Lord Wearmouth's plantations, with their very plain governess. On this rencontre, the really fine hair of the prettiest was admirably displayed, by mamma's disliking the set of her bonnet, and taking it off to replace it in better style.

Mrs. Shafto was too experienced a general to call attention to the wax-doll head of her *Jemima*: she simply exclaimed, "What a mop this head is!" As passing her fingers through the thick flaxen curls, she disposed them with more order round the bold red cheeks.

Even this surprise did not take Major Stanhope: he escaped without other loss than that of his first inclination to know more of Miss O'Hara. In justice to our young field officer, it is however, right to state, that he yielded up this wish not to the pitiful attempt at degrading Honoria from her rank as a gentlewoman, but to his own constitutional abhorrence of being spied at; to certain notions of duty to his father; and as the mess phrase ran, the fear of being *badgered* by the Shafto Place family; a consequence he saw would be inevitable, did he prosecute any acquaintance at the Rectory.

I am sorry to inform my fairest readers, that very few men indeed are so hardly hit by the most formidable artillery of beauty, on one encounter, as to be unable to draw off their forces at will, and march away in as good order as the Major did. Will they pardon me, if I add, the fact seems greatly in the nobler sex's favour!

Mrs. Shafto delighted herself with thinking that she

had deprived Miss O'Hara of one admirer. Satisfied of that she generously endeavoured to supply her with another; and some gracious remarks to their agent, Chaplin, upon the good appearance and pretensions of his sons, together with a gentle hint of where she thought, from certain tokens, one of them might make himself acceptable, and where *connexion* might stand in lieu of fortune—(What adverse pictures of Honoria's condition!)—these duly repeated to Mr. Edmund Chaplin, rapidly increased his incipient liking for the pretty Honor O'Hara, (as he was accustomed familiarly to call her, like all other under-bred people speaking among their intimates, of those they know slightly, and secretly allow to be their superiors,) and at once gave substance and shape to his intentions.

From that hour he became a constant visiter at the Rectory; and having formally *warned* off his brother, betook himself to win and wear the beauty of Edenfell. His whole plan consisted in duly drinking a certain quantum of tea every evening of her making; as duly pronouncing the said tea, through all its changes from bachelor's essence to husband's cat-lap, "most super-excellent!" regularly being of her opinion upon every subject, however absurdly she might deliver herself, and rarely appearing without some Morocco needle-book, French riband, or gilt scent-bottle, first to offer to Miss O'Hara, then give to Mrs. Meredith. To the latter, these little presents were agreeable indemnifications for all the tea he drank: so he was welcome to her—to Honoria he was insupportable.

Yet Mr. Edmund Chaplin, though bred to the talking and troublesome profession of the law, was a most inoffensive visiter; for he said nothing, unless he was particularly addressed: he belonged, in fact, to that class of silent wooers, of which I believe nearly every agreeable woman has had one, at least, during her life; who come regularly to their father's or mother's house every day: place themselves, what the Scotch term, *right forenent* the object of their admiration; sitting still, and saying nothing; everybody as regularly wondering "what can bring that eternal Mr. Smith, or Mr. Thomson to the

house!"—till, at length, after two or three years' steady visiting (your silent lovers being always slow ones too) *the brazen head* opens its mouth, and the proposal is made, accepted, or refused.

Mr. Edmund Chaplin was quietly proceeding onward to this point, by dint of evening visits, while a very different personage was aiming at the same object almost every morning.

Frazer of Dunraven regarded not bodily refreshment of any kind; no, nor confusion of household concerns: so he might but have ingress to Mr. Meredith's reading-room, talk, and once at least during the forenoon, see and seize upon the attention of Miss O'Hara, he was indifferent to every thing else.

By a lucky chance, for it was not the consequence of delicate consideration, Mr. Frazer made his first appearance at the Rectory, not merely to inquire after his partner at the ball, but as the express visiter of its master. He brought some scarce volume, to which he had referred during one of their learned discussions at Arthur's Court, and with which Mr. Meredith was unacquainted. Thus establishing intellectual intimacy with the uncle, he could let his inclination for the niece run on without the necessity of declaring it, either to herself or others, until it was fit time to do so.

Mr. Frazer's well-known passion for research, and the many forenoons he spent solely in settling disputed points, and hunting authorities through all the books he found, and all he brought to Edenfell, gave sufficient colour for his visits, to prevent the servants from saying, and Mrs. Meredith from admitting, the probability of village-gossip being right, when it proclaimed Miss O'Hara as his object. Honoria herself was so awakened by Captain Fitz Arthur's observations, that although she could not deny herself the pleasure and instruction derivable from listening to the interesting discussions now frequent, where formerly only vulgar wrangling was heard, took care to evince as much interest in her uncle's evident display of erudition, as in the wilder information and keener remarks of the Laird.

At once rendered wary of inferences, and indulgent to Mr. Frazer's possible mistakes concerning her, by Captain Fitz Arthur's sincerity, she managed to have the Æolian harp presented to the house rather than to herself. The instrument was found to sound finely only in one particular window, where the wind poured a fuller stream: and though Honoria, after she had heard its thrilling, spirit-like wailing, longed to appropriate it to her own room, still she had the self-denial to denominate the harp, a fixture, for which all future occupants of the Rectory would be assuredly bound to return thanks to the donor as the present Rector.

Mr. Frazer's hardy sort of love felt no chill from this quiet refusal of his offering. In truth, Honoria had accepted the best part of it, when she went to hear it in full play:—yet how could she, without insolence or affectation, refuse to do so?

As the wind, sweeping all the strings of the harp at the same moment with one wild blast, bore on and carried away sounds to which no music from mortal hand is comparable, either for sublimity or sadness, it seemed to sweep her soul along with it. Her colour died and revived in her cheeks—she scarcely breathed—and the rapt attention of her faculties was visible in the fixity of her eyes.

"Well, what think you of this music?" was the Laird's exulting question. "What does it make you feel?"

Honoria woke as from a trance—"It is like Ossian—like the sea—like being alone among mountains!" was her answer, her heart beating violently, her whole soul too completely roused for the soft luxury of tears. "It agitates too much—I feel that I must be by myself before I can quite enjoy it!"

What would Fitz Arthur not have given to have heard this declaration?—it would have laid all his fears of Mr. Frazer to rest. The latter had no perception of what it implied; but ever ready to oblige Honoria, took Mr. Meredith by the arm, leaving her to solitude, and the harp.

Mr. Frazer was a man of sudden, yet steady purpose; he was his own master; he had never been in the habit of considering himself accountable for his actions to any one. Miss O'Hara's countenance and manner made a strong impression upon him at the first glance. By his wanderings round the country, he knew that the clergyman of Edenfell was of a good Yorkshire family, and a scholar into the bargain: and that his portionless niece came of as good a one on her father's side. Her conversation, or rather as Fitz Arthur suspected, her interest in *his*, fascinated him completely; and before he had talked to her of nightingales and the South, he had said to himself, "This girl shall be my wife." Mrs. Shafto's arts to fix his attention upon the aunt's vulgarity merely made him utter his thoughts too bluntly in consequence; for Mr. Frazer did not harbour the least suspicion that he might be rejected. A man must be very much in love, or very deeply imbued with the idea of a woman's delicacy on the subject of marriage, to dream of rejection. Many men (I say it with due deference,) consider women so lightly as to care for no livelier sentiment from them than simple preference; they ask for no higher qualities in a wife than the capacity of wondering at and believing in *their* superiority. That nobler admiration, which is paid by some similarity of *mental* power, they deem out of the question. For such men, there exists none of those refined gratifications and nobler joys which are so dearly and justly prized by tenderer sensibilities; for them there is no second, more fondly cherished self, in whom their existence is doubled, their excellencies reflected, their very being heightened into dignity by the consciousness of actuating and blessing that of another.

The chief purpose of Mr. Frazer's visits became soon so evident to Honoria, from certain careless expressions of his, that she spoke at once to her uncle; honestly declaring her inability to bear the idea of giving herself for life to the man of whom, clever as he was, she got tired in half a day. Our heroine was too little experienced in the world to feel or feign the slightest regret at this

rebellion of the heart against prudence ; and Mr. Meredith was scarcely more inclined than herself to grieve at the loss of so brilliant an establishment for her : he felt the value of her confidence, and willingly promised to lend his aid to her determination of discouraging the Laird's addresses, by refraining from even the ordinary hospitality of pressing his calls upon himself ; and he did it the more cheerfully from observing the happy security of Frazer's manner. Mr. Meredith's love had been timid as tender ; it was tinged by his character ; and so limited was his knowledge of human nature, that he could not believe in the existence of a passion without these marks. He was, therefore, loth to give his precious niece to one who he fancied merely admired her as a pretty decoration : and Mr. Frazer was therefore intended to be civilly distanced.

Mr. Frazer easily settled this sudden reserve of the worthy minister's as the result of honest pride, solicitous to avoid the odium of trying to draw him on. Honoria's unvarying conduct was as easily accounted for. The Laird was no further skilled in woman's characters than as the common-places of common books and common talk teach. Women were proverbially shy and sly, and given to *look* no, as well as to say no, when they meant to say yes, after all ; so Mr. Frazer went on, haranguing as usual in her presence, every now and then detaining herself and her attention, by force of his vigorous intellect.

Honoria did not lose by such a lover ; she gained much valuable information, besides the habit of retracing in her own mind the events, opinions, or arguments she listened to, analyzing their strength or weakness, importance or emptiness, and so habituating herself to correct her own bad taste or false judgments upon other occasions.

She *gained* also the *loss* of Mr. Edmund Chaplin. Mr. Frazer's obvious confidence quelled that of this less fixed character. Conscious of inferiority in every point estimated by the world in general ; such as station, fortune, acquirements ; the wary youth prudently withdrew, without subjecting Honoria to what she would have

deemed the humiliation, what *he* concluded she would consider the triumph, of receiving an offer of his hand.

Mr. Frazer, immediately upon Mr. Edmund Chaplin's return to business at York, was looked upon by all the village as Miss O'Hara's declared suitor : and as since Miss O'Hara's appearance at Sir Everard Fitz Arthur's ball, several of the neighbouring gentry who had not hitherto visited Mr. Meredith now called upon her ; Mrs. Shafto heard on all sides, of the great match Mr. Meredith's niece was likely to make, in spite of her many disadvantages.

Miss Shafto had just begun to promulgate her unfounded belief of Mr. Frazer's being six and forty instead of six and thirty ; Miss Augusta to talk of him as the most tyrannical-tempered man breathing, and consequently to express pity for the poor girl, who must think it her duty to marry him from her *very under* situation ; when Mr. Frazer suddenly disappeared from every ordinary haunt—he left the county—he went, without taking leave of any one !

All Edenfell was in amazement, for Miss O'Hara went about as usual, and things went on at the Rectory as usual. Gossips were puzzled—friends posed : the one set feared to extort the secret of Mr. Frazer's refusal, if they were too broad in hints of his having jilted the lady ; and the others were honourably left unable to refute the last mortifying assertion.

The plain fact was, that Mr. Frazer had been refused ; and that the unceremonious offer he made for her to the uncle, after being referred to herself, was known only to those three persons.

At first the Laird was incredulous of Honoria's rejection, though made to him by herself. He would not hear of his visiting no more at the rectory, except as her uncle's visiter ;—he laughed at her *demure airs of earnest*, as he styled her repeated assurances that she could not regard him as he wished—then bade her be a little less womanish and fantastical, and tell him honestly that she would have him. It was quite impossible, in Mr. Frazer's opinion, that she should prefer

generous silence on the subject of Mr. Frazer's proposal ; but they never varied in their cordial mention of his talents and good qualities.

Mrs. Meredith triumphed at home by perpetual invectives against her niece for having suffered Mr. Edmund Chaplin to slip through her fingers, while trying to catch one who would not be caught ; and abroad she railed at Mr. Frazer, for coming as much to the Rectory as if it were his own house, and then going off without thanks or present to her.

During great part of Mr. Frazer's reign at the Rectory, (for every house he lived much at, he lorded over — its opinions at least,) Captain Fitz Arthur was absent upon family business, which he had found particularly convenient for him to execute at that time. On his return to Arthur's Court, the Laird of Dunraven was gone. He guessed his fate ; and at that moment he could afford him a sigh of sincere commiseration.

His own prospects, however, were not better by Frazer's removal. He was quite sure that at present he himself was an object of indifference to Miss O'Hara ; and he despaired of ever having it in his power to endeavour at exciting that tender interest in her breast, without obtaining which, life seemed as if it could have no charms for him.

In addition to his father's involved property, there were duties which, to fulfil properly, must clog his own actions through the whole season of manhood and middle age.

To make the most out of Hylton's frail constitution that could be made, was one of these duties ; to rectify the more serious injury done to his younger brother's mind and temper, by excessive indulgence at home and injudicious treatment at school, was another. To the performance of these, Fitz Arthur must devote money, time, and assiduity ; he must therefore give up the army, and perhaps give up a wife.

Fitz Arthur had reflected again and again upon the right, and the practicable, and the rational, in his own case. He aimed at no theatrical effects in his con-

duct ; he coveted no praise for heroism ; he would far rather have had no sacrifice to make : but when good sense and good principle told him one ought to be made, he determined on it immediately. He decided that it would be wrong in him to return to India ; nay, even to remain in the army,—he must sell out, and betake himself to the sober life of a country gentleman.

By so doing he would be enabled to act for his father, without appearing to do so ; he would be at hand, to keep their new system of prudent expenditure and regular liquidation going steadily forward, and be able also to put a timely stop to fresh impositions upon Sir Everard's good-nature.

By such means, the heir of Arthur's Court might be privileged, after a few years, in thinking of Miss O'Hara. But Miss O'Hara would, long ere that, have seen and been seen by the man formed to captivate her heart and her imagination. There could be no hope for Fitz Arthur, then, except her affections were previously engaged to him. To attempt such engagement, generosity, nay, even love forbade. Fitz Arthur truly loved—prizing the happiness of Honoria far, far beyond his own. "I must not think of such felicity as that of being her husband ; I must not repine that she is never likely to be mine !" Such was his musing, communing with himself, as he paced the picture-gallery at Arthur's Court. "I must not allow myself to think—My lot is a little hard—All those whom these dumb memorials represent have had wife, children, grandchildren, to love and to lament them ; while I must live and die unloved, unloving, sad, and solitary !"

Fitz Arthur checked himself—not from shame of his own impudent assertion, made in the very faces of several persons qualified to contradict him ; for some had died bachelors, and others had lived miserable husbands—but from remorse at his ingratitude to Heaven, and his injustice to the living : he thought of poor Hylton's fate, and of his affection ; of friends in distant lands ; of neighbours and servants close at hand ; of his father's affectionate devotion to his better judgment.

"I am an unworthy wretch!" he exclaimed; "I will not complain of my lot; it has many sweeteners—and it might be so much embittered!—Good God! it may still be so!"

At that moment an object flashed across Fitz Arthur's thoughts, which had of late often occupied them, to the exclusion of every cheering image—it was a person whom he had never seen, but had twice heard of accidentally, without knowing who he was, or why he came to Sir Everard.

There were some circumstances attending this person's appearance which caused a most grievous suspicion—grievous indeed, to a son who would willingly have believed his father incapable of any one act that could lessen a child's reverence—he suspected this person to be an illegitimate son of Sir Everard's.

Of the existence of such a brother, Fitz Arthur certainly had never heard; but that was no evidence against strong presumptions in support of the disgraceful suspicion.

Since the necessary examination of his father's circumstances, our heir had found several large sums unaccounted for, which, when he naturally reverted to them, Sir Everard begged might not be further questioned; and lately, another unaccounted sum had disappeared from their banker's book.

Fitz Arthur knew that his father was no gamester, and that all his present expenses at Arthur's Court were regulated by the plan laid down by his son, and left subject to his scrutiny. How then could this last sum be spent? After his son's return, Sir Everard, in the fulness and unforeseeingness of his heart, had shown him every letter he wrote or received: till one day he failed in a single instance.

As Fitz Arthur rather sought to avoid this habitual confidence, lest his father should at last feel it a sort of duty, he would have been pleased with the incident now under review, had not Sir Everard thrust this letter into his pocket with an air of confusion, and begun talking about something else, with a volubility quite unusual.

Delicacy forbade the expression, even of a son's curiosity ; and the incident passed from his mind ere the day concluded.

A week afterwards, as they were sitting at breakfast, Sir Everard's Swiss servant entered, and whispering something to his master, Sir Everard got up hastily and left the room. Soon afterwards, he sent a message to say he was engaged, and begged Mrs. Fothergill might not wait for him.

When the father and son met at dinner that day, the former answered the latter's natural question of whether his morning occupation had been about any business in which he could assist him, by a few evasive words, immediately shifting the discourse ; his son was too respectful to repeat his inquiry. But shortly afterwards, discovering the diminished fund at their banker's, he put the two circumstances together, and had his own painful surmises in consequence.

One of Fitz Arthur's retrenching acts was to do without a personal servant ; there were some little offices, however, which his father's old Swiss insisted upon performing for him : and during the performance of these offices, Wilhelm had opportunities of hinting his knowledge of some secret unknown to his young master. Wilhelm had more than once spoken of "cruel drains still upon his honoured master's kind heart : " coupling this with certain grave remarks about "children born in sin, always living to become shames : " adding, "that it was all right and good to give natural sons education, but it should not be like gentlemen—to give them thoughts above themselves, and so bring them to ruin. He should cast no reproaches upon a poor lady in her grave, but he was very sorry for his master."

Captain Fitz Arthur saw that the old man, grateful for his re-instatement at Arthur's Court through his means, wanted only a little encouragement to divulge the whole matter, to one whom he believed had some right to know it. But Fitz Arthur knew a son's duty too well to tamper with a domestic for the sake of ac-

quiring a knowledge of what his father chose to withhold ; he, therefore, endeavoured to stop these insinuations, without wounding the poor man's feelings. Wilhelm's intention was good ; he was only mistaken in the means he used.

The Swiss silenced and cautioned, Fitz Arthur revolved in his mind whether he ought or ought not to speak to his father upon the subject, which he concluded must be Wilhelm's secret. If such a being existed, as a brother of such birth, breeding, and habits, as Wilhelm hinted, it seemed incumbent upon him, for his other brother's sakes, to inquire into this unfortunate one's character and pursuits. Yet how to wring such a humiliating confession from his father ! A father, already too much humbled by the consciousness of indiscretion and profusion !

With the only cowardice which can belong to a good heart—the fear of giving pain, Captain Fitz Arthur deferred this inquiry from day to day, till the very morning we are now intruding upon his solitude : when walking up and down the picture gallery with his father, their cheerful converse was interrupted by the entrance of Wilhelm, who coming up close to Sir Everard, whispered something like “ That gentleman, sir.” Left alone immediately, it is not surprising that a man of Captain Fitz Arthur's character, by whom virtue and reputation were considered the finest inheritances, should fall into melancholy ruminations. He sought to arrest his thoughts from his father's secret, and the act carried them to his own. He remembered every look and word that had ever charmed him from Honoria ; and he could recollect no argument in favour of indulging the tenderness such remembrance awakened.

Fitz Arthur was from principle an enemy to fruitless musings, inclined, as he was, by a poetical taste, and a love-cherishing heart, to the dangerous practice. At present he found himself in that state of nervous dispiritedness, which sometimes render even the strongest mind powerless ; and conscious, therefore, that his

continued rumination must grow into something worse than idling, he had just sufficient vigour left to rouse himself and go into the air.

The next moment he was out upon the honeysuckle walk, as the terrace behind the house was called. It was a fine spring day; and a confusion of nameless sweet smells came on his sense with the "nimble air." Scarcely any flowers were yet blowing in the garden; but the sweetbriar hedge was out, and a passing shower had just called forth its quickened scent.

Fitz Arthur descended the steps of the terrace, and having studiously set himself to inspect the state of some tulip roots, which he had put into the ground himself to please his brother Hylton's taste, he left it, to speak with some labourers beyond.

After fetching a compass round what remained of the park, he was returning by its inner line to the house, with a large handful of sow thistles for his invalid's pet rabbits, when he heard an angry voice calling to some boy, *to mind what he was doing*: coupling the exhortation with a hearty curse. At such unusual sounds in his father's demeſne, Fitz Arthur involuntarily stopped. A gap in the fence gave him a full view of the youngster addressed, of the horse he was bid to take care of, and of the speaker. The latter, a well-dressed handsome man, about thirty, was standing, carefully examining a parcel of notes in a pocket-book.

Ere this person had closed the pocket-book, and mounted his horse, Fitz Arthur had completely surveyed him. The face, he thought, was that of a determined, thorough-paced scoundrel:—the features were regular,—the countenance bad. It had a peculiar hardness of expression, in addition to a certain sensual grossness, indicative of a nature which would have its own gratification at any price; and like the horrible Egalité's, would be ready to purchase the enjoyments of a brute by the acts of a fiend.

Fitz Arthur's blood ran cold as he looked on this man, and heard his loud startling voice again say, as he threw a piece of money to the boy, "There, d——

you!" He did not doubt that this was the person whose history Wilhelm appeared so anxious to instruct him in; he must be his brother, then.

As the conviction sank upon Fitz Arthur's heart, a set of horrible probabilities in this man's career, past and to come, rose on the instant before him. Every possible degree of low vice and shameless depravity: —forgery, murder, outlawry, suicide, nay, the very gallows, seemed to him written in legible characters on his dark and sinister brow. A cold dew gathered over that of poor Fitz Arthur,—he stood for many, many minutes, in death-like stillness: then turning abruptly away, he said in a tone of agony, "True! true! what have I to do with happiness?"

The stern misery of his mind allowed not of tears: but his heart was wrung for his only parent. Disgrace and dishonour, nay, total ruin perhaps, might be the portion of his father's old age. At that moment, what a sermon Fitz Arthur could have preached to every libertine!

He turned out of the demesne, and striking into a wood skirting the road, endeavoured, while wandering there, to settle his disordered thoughts, and reconcile the jarring wishes and resolutions of every second instant.

Now it was that Fitz Arthur felt all the value of what he was resigning for his family—for what a relief it would have been to selfish sensibility, could he have gone immediately to his regiment, and there plunged at once into the business of his profession! But duty and affection commanded him to remain where he was. He must now stand forth to protect, if not his lawful inheritance, at least the comforts and rights of his young brothers. It was evident this man was making spoil of these; and if his system of secret robbery were suffered to go on, their father's weakness might be worked upon to their complete destruction. There was no path, then, for a son to take with honour to himself, except the direct one. He determined, therefore, upon speaking to Sir Everard that very day.

Amidst the bitterness of these ruminations, there was some consolation to Fitz Arthur—the solitary one of thinking, from the apparent age of the reprobate, that he must have been born three or four years previous to their father's first marriage. Had it appeared a later event, even the tenderest of sons, the most lenient of judges, felt he could not have forborne a word, or look of reproach—a mother's memory is so sacred! Resting his thoughts upon this single consolatory point, and aware that, to execute his painful and delicate task, he must be in full self-possession, he quitted the wood, with all its wild spring flowers of unheeded sweetness, and rambled in a wider direction; endeavouring to give salutary refreshment to his spirit by stopping every now and then to talk with the farmers, and notice their children.

After all, there was no better cordial he knew of, for a sick heart, than the sight of dear Mrs. Preston's kindly smile, and the sound of her welcoming voice. He went therefore to Hazeldean.

CHAPTER VI.

It was the last day of March. One of those soft sunny days which, coming immediately after a long succession of frosts, storms, rains, and east winds, takes us by an agreeable surprise, like an unexpected and welcome guest, spreading gladness over every countenance.

Mrs. Preston and one of her daughters were literally idling to enjoy it; they were sitting under one of those large stone porches, common to old farmhouses, and which still remained at Hazeldean, by way of support to the rose-bushes that grew against and climbed over it.

As yet there were only leaves on the rose-trees, and those but unfolding: however, the fruit-trees made amends for their deficiency. The cherry,—the plum,—the almond, were all covered with blossoms: even the currant-bushes, with their flowers of delicate and doubtful green, gave a smilingness to the scene, and added humbly to its sweets; a few ground-bees were seen hovering among the ivies that clothed a standing fragment of the ruined abbey, allured thither by the sunshine and the blossoms; and the clear note of the blackbird was heard at intervals breaking through his thick covert of hazel copse. Mrs. Preston's loveable aspect seemed reflecting the sunshine and the amenity of all around her; whilst her daughter Bella sat, in happy vacancy of thought or expression, by her side, listening, not attending, to the gay chat of two young ladies and their handsome brother, who were unluckily quizzing one another about some home-jest that had nothing to do with fashion.

Honorina was one of the Hazeldean party; but she was sitting out on a bench at a short distance, under the shade of an ancient yew, now almost as shattered and venerable as the ruin itself: her hat was lying on the ground, (its crown stuffed with violets,) and her uncovered head bent over a thin quarto she was intently reading. The volume bore all the marks of a new publication, such as a blue paper back, and a ragged edging of very white leaves, evidently torn asunder by hasty fingers.

"Don't trouble yourself to speak to Miss O'Hara," said the young man in the porch, seeing Fitz Arthur make an involuntary halt, as he was passing her. "She is *rapt* just now, as our friend Miss Dulcy would say if she were here. You know, Mrs. Preston, I quiz the fair *dulcibella* now and then, upon her fine phrases."

"What is Miss O'Hara's study?" asked Fitz Arthur of herself, in a voice still tinged with melancholy.

"O pray don't speak to me: let me finish this lovely ballad," was her reply, without once looking up. Fitz

Arthur sighed unconsciously, and passed on; he sat down beside Mrs. Preston in silence; but Fitz Arthur had the knack of making his silence say something, when he thought it right to do so; and now the sweet complacency with which he first eyed the garden, then rested his soft regards upon Mrs. Preston herself, spoke sufficiently. The gentle smile accompanying both actions expressed satisfaction.

“Did you ever see such a foolish lassie?” asked the motherly mistress of Hazeldean, “to sit poring over that book, when we have such a day as this! I don’t think she has said ten words to us, since Mr. William here, gave her the sing-song thing.”

“Poetry!—and what is the volume?” asked Fitz Arthur, merely for the sake of forcing himself into conversation.

Mr. William Mulcaster did not require to be asked twice for information. “O, it is miscellaneous,—love, glory,—death and despair,—sonnets and elegies,—odes and ballads,—a first production. By Jove, a capital one!—anonymous though; but I know who he is, an old Eton friend.—All London is talking of the book: every body reading it,—buying it,—begging it,—borrowing it,—stealing it. In short, there has not been such an uproar about pen and ink craft, since the days of Junius.”

“Miss O’Hara is then singularly lucky to get the book, without committing any enormity for it,” observed Fitz Arthur, aiming at a little playfulness, to resist his own blue devils. “The writer conceals his name; but you say, you know him: Do you think he deserves his reputation?”

“He is as much admired as his book, I can tell you, wherever he goes. A monstrous fine figure,” (Mr. Mulcaster was a careless speaker for a college-man,) “noble air of the head,—eyes that look you through in no time,—and, out and out, the best private actor, and the best mathematician in Europe.”

Honor’s eyes were now off her book and fixed on the speaker.

"Your friend's talents take a wide range, it should seem," observed Fitz Arthur, still manfully rolling up the conversation, or it would have fallen back upon him, a dead weight,—“has he any profession?”

"Only that of a fine gentleman," replied Mulcaster, with good-humoured levity,—“the snuggest profession going. Let me tell you, he is one of our leaders in that line, for all he dabbles in rhyme-tagging. When he was at Oxford, all our *crack* fellows used to dress after him: so they do now in London; and, as to women's hearts, he mows them down by dozens.”

"No wonder!" said Fitz Arthur, "with such notable weapons as you describe—figure, eyes, acting, and mathematics! It is a pity he does not use them to a better purpose." Fitz Arthur spoke with a tincture of austerity unusual to him; it was not directly meant at this unknown poet; it arose from the morbid state of distaste to mere pleasure-hunting society, in which his late reflections had placed him; and, recollecting himself, he added, "a genius for the sweetest and sublimest of arts would of itself make a man dangerous to a sex so much more susceptible of fine impressions than ours. So I must hope your friend is as merciful as he is mighty." Then observing Honoria's attention directed from her book to their dialogue, he confusedly uttered a wish of being permitted to judge of the new poet, by her reading one of the poems aloud.

"O no!" she exclaimed; "I have just finished one, and you shall read us the next." Rising as she spoke, she came into the porch, and held out the volume to him.

Fitz Arthur took it in silence; and after a few instants given to calm certain flutterings of his heart, read with unaffected variety and sweetness of voice, a desultory poem, merely entitled "Musings," in which were many faults and some beauties: both the faulty and the better passages deeply tinctured with a sadness, which harmonizing with the existing feelings of the reader, bribed him into approbation.

When he concluded, Honoria who had been listen-

ing to him like one entranced, (though ungratefully mindless of the beautiful medium through which the poetry was transmitted,) was for a long time lost in the attempt at recalling all her favourite passages : and quite unconsciously, repeated audibly, with deeper pathos, and softer tones, than even Fitz Arthur had done, some of the lines lingering on her ear :—

“ There, Memory wanders through her leaf-strewn paths,
Heark'ning the many echoes of the past ;
Which, or from ruin'd hall, or lonely tomb,
Or human voice dear loved, with mournful sound
Knells on her widowed heart !”

“ That is so lovely !”

Fitz Arthur's eyes filled with tears, as hers seemed to ask for sympathy with their admiration. He was thinking of his brother Hedworth ; he turned away his head. Honoria had never before thought Fitz Arthur's eyes so finely expressive : hers were yet resting on him, with newly awakened interest, when he looked round again. The expression of her face threw him into fresh disorder ; it was a moment or two before he could speak : he tried to articulate steadily, whilst observing,—“ Yes, that passage struck me while reading it. Perhaps, from my unprofitable habit of thinking more of the past, than is either wise or worthy, in one that has a present and a future to live in.”

“ Nay, but this passage,” interrupted Mr. Mulcaster, unceremoniously snatching the volume out of Fitz Arthur's hand, and loudly declaiming,—

“ ‘ Strange was that fated night ! the granulous shower
Rang on the earth, ice-paved ; its hollow sound,
Like rain metallic ; prone at once it fell,
Unwaved by wind. But ever and anon
Long roll of distant thunder mutter'd far
Among the embattled clouds ; and lightnings flash'd :
Sounds, deep and dire, came from the ocean caves ;
Though neither blast swept their dark depth,
Nor living thing within, wail uttered !—
O, 'twas a night to quail the——’ ”

“ No horrors,—no horrors !” interrupted Miss Pres-

ton. "I do assure you, Mr. Mulcaster, horrors are going out. Mr. Lewis and all his ghosts and monks are to be quite out of fashion before this season ends."

"With all my heart!" exclaimed Mr. Mulcaster, "only listen to my favourite here: the subject *must* please you ladies." And clearing his voice with three preparatory hems, in the true style of set-reading; he went see-sawing through the following stanzas. It was impossible to decide whether Mr. Mulcaster read in jest or in earnest.

" Composed on the Beach at ———.

" Here, where sands of ocean lie
Smooth beneath the azure sky,
Scarcely mark'd, yon tide draws nigh :
Like unseen love.

Sparkling in the joyous sun,
See its emerald waves come on,
Murmuring music as they run ;
Like whispering love.

" Now with kissings soft, they lave
Level beach and pebbly cave,
Rilling back each glassy wave ;
Like half-check'd love.

" Yet, from each receding low,
Farther streams their onward flow,
Rising fast, though seeming slow ;
Alas! like love.

" Higher heaves the strengthen'd tide,
Swifter now its volumes glide,
Deeper, though they spread more wide ;
Still, still like love.

" Lo! the flat sands disappear,
Ripples into billows rear,
Foaming high, yet glittering clear ;
Like bolder love.

" On they rush, with foam and flash,
O'er the shoals and inlets dash,
Covering each with joyous splash ;
Like conquering love.

"All that on that varied shore
Soothed or charm'd the sense before,
Lies at once deep flooded o'er;
Like hearts by love!"

As various as the humours of the audience, were the opinions given of this trifle.

Miss Bella pronounced it *in good taste*; both the Misses Mulcaster "thought it must be very descriptive and very just; but they could not say: they were not qualified to judge of its fidelity. (Laughing and blushing all the while.) William indeed was quite competent; for every body knew—" Here they laughed again, and whispered something to Miss Preston, in which the name of a certain Lady Catherine was audibly mixed. Miss Bella's ears visibly stretched at the sound.

Mrs. Preston declared the verses were better than most things about love, for there was nothing dismal in them.

Mr. Mulcaster avowed his unqualified approbation; hinted at his sympathy with all lovers; talked of lurking wishes, and ambushed Cupids,—of passions like pick-pockets, robbing men before they were aware; then raved off in admiration of sundry blazing odes, in which the lover was described as stricken instantaneously by the lightning of beauty: in fact, proving to demonstration, that as yet, Mr. William Mulcaster knew nothing of love, either as a sentiment or as a passion.

Captain Fitz Arthur managed to say nothing. Honoria, who alone of all the company had never been or fancied herself in love, spoke in her usual spirit of frank remark. She owned the awful subject was wholly speculative with her; and laughingly wondered what shape the disease would take in her when her turn came: she could only say, she thought herself more likely to be struck all at once, than to be stolen upon.

"Ay, ay, Honor, child, so you say," interrupted Mrs. Preston, laying her hand on Honoria's arm with motherly freedom. "Yet for all this, you may be heart-over in that deep sea, even now, without your knowing

it Few persons find out they are in that treacherous water till they are within an inch of their lives ; and then it is too late, as Mr. William's friend writes."

A glance from Mrs. Preston's frankly laughing eye, had so effectually turned away Captain Fitz Arthur's at this moment, that he lost the opportunity afforded him of seeing how Miss O'Hara looked when an allusion was made to a *possible*—oh, no, he feared—an *impossible* latent feeling for himself. He trembled lest his old friend's adventurous remark should have the effect of chilling Honoria's manner, or of drawing forth some killing answer. Honoria, however, had covered momentary embarrassment, by regaining the new publication ; and now suddenly exclaimed —

"Oh, Mr. Mulcaster, you said the writer had not put his name to his work ; why, here it is, in the title-page : and who do you think it is ?" she added, turning with animation upon Fitz Arthur.

Never did her brilliant eyes sparkle more brilliantly, never did her countenance glow with more light and beauty, never did her clear voice ring with more silvery sweetness !

"Who can it be ?" asked Fitz Arthur eagerly, anxiously.

"Hear the title !" she resumed,—*'Feelings and Fancies, by Peter Gubbins, Esq.'* Alack, what an unpoetical name ! But my knight of the shamrock."

"What's in a name ? It is nor hand nor foot !" Mr. Mulcaster started off with ; quoting Romeo or Juliet, in his capacity of lover.

"Mr. Peter Gubbins !" reiterated Captain Fitz Arthur, in a tone of greater surprise, nay emotion, than Honoria thought the occasion justified. "*Is your friend the author of this book. I mean the gentleman who was at Arthur's Court a month or two ago ? But you were away then.*"

"The same, the identical same," replied Mr. Mulcaster ; "Raby told me afterwards."

"Then your friend is one of the strangest persons I know," returned Fitz Arthur. "I wish he would leave

off going about the world as he does, masquerading in private as well as in public."

"Ah, ha! I see you *do* know him!" exclaimed Mr. Mulcaster, and a look of intelligence then passed between him and Fitz Arthur. Honoria saw there was a mystery. The Misses Mulcasters were clamorous for explanation: both spoke in one breath,—“O do tell us, Captain Fitz Arthur! Do tell us of what profession Mr. Peter Gubbins is,—and who he belongs to,—and where he comes from. William is so close and cross.”

“Be quiet, girls! hands off, I tell you!” cried their brother, shaking off the young ladies as they tried to pull him away, and get possession of Captain Fitz Arthur. “I protect Fitz Arthur! Mind your own little business, and don’t pry into state secrets; go on jabbering about your ribands and rebuses, and leave us lords of the creation to a snug confabulation of our own.”

“Ah, now! dear William!—Darling William!—”

“Avaunt, ye bell-clapper fiends!” exclaimed their good-humoured but resolute brother. “I tell you, ye shall know no more of Mr. Peter Gubbins than that he wears a green shade, and writes books. Whether he sweeps the streets for his pastime between whiles, or scribbles as a scrivener, becometh not me to tell you. Away, slight things!”

“Well then, this I am sure of,” laughed Sophia Mulcaster, “that your friend is a fright with red eyes. Faugh! nauseous!”

“That *I* know he is not!” thought Honoria, who not choosing to be one of the jostled off querists, quietly betook herself to the book again.

“O now, I know all about him!” suddenly exclaimed Jane Mulcaster. “Don’t you remember, Sophy, when William was staying at Lord Sarum’s, he came home raving of a monstrously clever, agreeable young man, an architect who had been studying in Italy and Greece, and was brought to Lord Sarum’s by Lord Francis Fitz James? And—”

“O mercy, yes!” interrupted Sophia. “William

said he was such a genius, that it was a pity he was not exactly one of their set. O! I remember his being so sorry that his father was only a hop-merchant;—yes, yes, this is the man I am sure.”

“Sweet simpletons! Darling innocents!” exclaimed Mr. Mulcaster. “So you have set it down in your wisdom, that a genius for building houses, and building the lofty rhyme, is one and the same thing!—go to! chatterers!”

But the sisters were not to be so easily put off; they persisted in accumulating reasons for the writer of *Feelings and Fancies* being the identical architect; who, although the son of a dealer in hops, was, by favour of divine genius, voted *presentable* in *good society*. They maintained that nothing was so natural, therefore, as his very proper shyness at Arthur's Court; he must so dislike owning his father's ignoble trade!

Nothing could be made out of Mr. William Mulcaster's shake of the head: it might have as many versions as the memorable one of Lord Burleigh. He accompanied it with the highly flattering exclamation of, “two regular missy girls!” And immediately commenced a short dialogue with the unwilling Fitz Arthur, in whispers.

Honorina, meanwhile, was poring and pondering over her book, endeavouring to settle, whether the son of a hop-merchant were entitled to precedence of the son of a law-agent? and whether Mr. William Mulcaster's provoking manner, did not indicate that his poetical and building friend were one and the same person?—Something within her, either prepossession or plain sense, told her that mind and morals were the real objects of her respect;—and that if either of the Messrs. Chaplin had been suspected of as much of the first quality, as was attributed to the obscure Gubbins, and not known to be so deficient in the other as report made them, their origin might have been a bar, but not an impassable one to her favour.

In the midst of these thoughts, Captain Fitz Arthur approached her,—he begged to look again at the volume

which he confessed had now a new interest for him, since he found it was written by her knight of the shamrock. Honoria relinquished the book.

Whilst he slowly turned over its leaves, she appeared, listening to a lecture of Miss Preston's, upon a threatened fashion of open sandals instead of shoes; which the latter declared, was on the point of becoming general, having appeared upon the modish feet of a certain duchess. The fair Bella's concluding exclamation of, "*and quelle goutte elle met dans les habits!*" was lost upon our heroine. Observing Fitz Arthur's eye going several times over the same page, she turned towards him, inquiring which of the little poems was distinguished by such repeated perusal?

"I fear I was not considering it with so much approval, as—" Fitz Arthur hesitated, he spoke with some emotion—"as—yet it interested me. Tell me what you think of it."

Honoria had not come so far in the volume as this little piece, from which she could, in truth, make out very little sense, and less poetry: she now read it with keen curiosity. The writer seemed purposely to have made it the vehicle of some private feeling: and was evidently too solicitous about expressing that feeling clearly, for one particular person's apprehension, to attempt clothing it in rich or beautiful imagery.

The substance of more than a dozen stanzas may be summed up, in saying, that they contained only a lover's reproaches to his mistress for refusing to become his wife; accusing her, (in addition to some regard for wealth and pleasure,) of sacrificing their mutual wishes to overstrained notions of duty; and ending, by the prophecy, first of his own death, and then of her eternal wretchedness, in consequence of that event.

Departing from her usual custom, Honoria, after having read these verses, did not immediately pronounce an opinion. Fitz Arthur had to inquire what she thought of them.

"In truth, I don't know," was her hesitating reply. "They seem to want a key: they refer to some situation

I can but guess at. However, they make me pity the writer."

"I fear they make *me* pity only the person to whom they are addressed, whoever she may be," was Fitz Arthur's answer.

"Pity *her*!" echoed Honoria. "Why, is not she described as a heartless creature, preferring grandeur to domestic happiness!"

"The poet accuses her, certainly; but I think only of high-strained virtue. His quarrel with her seems to be, that she has suffered some powerful principle, or, if you will, some sanctified prejudice, to control her actions and condemn her to singlehood. You observe he does not accuse her of preferring another; he has the vanity to believe in the eternity of her attachment to himself, and the barbarity to triumph in it. I cannot, therefore, sympathize with his feelings. Is there not something savage in the threatened punishment at the end of the poem?"

"Yes, if he really wished her so punished," returned Honoria, clinging to her prepossession; "but surely some allowance is to be made for surprised and outraged sensibility. Would it not be sufficient to madden a saint, to find a woman so inconsistent as to profess attachment, yet refuse competence with the man she professed it to, because he has not positive riches. This is what I understand from these verses."

"I grant it," replied Fitz Arthur gently; "nay, I will allow as much as you please to the infirmity of nature, even in less justifying circumstances—to sudden agony and momentary phrenzy—all this, uttered in plain prose, under a paroxysm of disappointment, I might have overheard, or even witnessed, yet have deeply commiserated the sufferer! but to pen down, and print such reproaches, seems to me unjustifiable. It must either arise from the unmanly wish of revenge; or from the selfish hope of awakening pity, till it has conquered reason, duty, or whatever else has been the writer's enemy."

“ ‘ He jests at scars, who never felt a wound ! ’ ”

repeated William Mulcaster, with a glance at his sisters, which neutralized his seeming belief of the critic's insensibility.

“ Ah ! Captain Fitz Arthur, you are hard upon poor love,” was Honoria's exclamation, as she raised her eyes to him ; his face was still suffused, for Mr. Mulcaster's glance had not escaped unobserved ; and trying to cover his confusion by an air of liveliness, he resumed hastily, “ In my opinion it is just as unlawful to apply tortures to the mind, as it is to the body, for the sake of extorting confessions. I can imagine a situation in which a woman may appear to deserve some such reproaches as these ; yet be, in fact, governed by the most admirable motives, whilst making the cruel sacrifice. I can imagine many more such situations on this sorrow-teeming globe than—”

“ Oh, now I understand you ! ” Honoria instantly thought of Miss Clavering. “ If this case at all resemble the one I perceive you are thinking of, then I admit my poet is unjustifiable.”

Another and another tide of blood overspread every part of Fitz Arthur's face as Honoria spoke ; but Mr. Mulcaster spared him the trouble of explaining, by breaking in upon the dialogue with a burst of laughter.

“ You two are capital fun just now, arguing about nothing ! Most ladies' way of arguing, by the way. I remember this poem well. I found a whole lot of them one day when I was rummaging up Gubbins's writing-case ; and he was in a fuss ; and at last told me they were meant for a romance he was writing. So it is some Philander or Orlando that Fitz Arthur would like to run through the body, and that you Miss O'Hara are in such a hurry to break your pitying heart for.”

“ What a waste of words and feelings then ! ” cried Honoria, secretly rejoiced at finding Mr. Peter Gubbins was only a lover in print. “ But I hope now, Captain Fitz Arthur, that you cease to consider my champion of the shamrock as one whom we ought not to take an interest

in." In spite of herself, Honoria could not prevent a little flutter being perceptible in her voice, as she asked this question; and Fitz Arthur was not the steadier in consequence, while answering.

"It would be a sort of fraud then, against an absent man, if I did not increase your interest in him, by telling you, that whether proud or ashamed of himself and his circumstances, he seemed to think it right to explain them in a note addressed to me the day after our ball, to apologise for certain appearances; but I must not repeat what he said."

"And did he not own his father was a hop-dealer?" asked both the Misses Mulcaster.

"He certainly did tell me more about himself than I could expect," replied Fitz Arthur, smiling at the hasty and vehement gestures of their brother behind them. "But as he had certainly no intention of circulating his confidence, you must pardon me for making myself full as disagreeable as your brother here."

"Horrid things! I dare say you are both freemasons!" ejaculated the eager Sophia. "Now I dare say you will be afraid of telling us whether the man writes a plain tradesman's hand, or a gentlemanly scrawl?"

"As poetical hand as fair lady could desire," was the answer. "Every second word left to the imagination."

"Did the letter please you otherwise?" inquired our heroine, half ashamed of the interest she felt in the writer.

Indeed it did. There was a noble candour in it,—a self-blame for something of intrusion; but I am saying too much. I suspect he wished even the fact of his letter to be as private as its contents. Yet so called upon here,—so tempted to do justice to one who honoured himself by humbling himself,—one so justly admired for—talents,—so called upon, I really cannot be so very discreet as I ought."

Generous Fitz Arthur! Thus to arm another's image against your own dearest wishes! At that moment a glance from Honoria thrilled through every nerve of

his body, followed by the immediate conviction of delight being folly ; for the mere approval of that look might as well belong to the being of her imagination, as to himself. In truth, the glance was like "life's mingled yarn, good and ill together;" for both admiration of the speaker, and the spoken of, were in it. Neither the one nor the other, as yet, however, could have claimed the largest portion of the sentiment.

Whatever that eye-beam implied, Fitz Arthur felt that it would be wise in him not to stay for another. So rising, with as much calmness as he could assume, he hastily wished the little party good morning, and retired.

Miss O'Hara was now left to bear the brunt of every one's raillery or railing. Mr. Mulcaster accused her of being cruelly insensible to his friend Fitz Arthur's ill-concealed passion. Miss Preston declared, it was quite out of the Captain's power to be in Miss O'Hara's society without *committing* himself. The Misses Mulcaster good-humouredly declared, they were glad they saw too little of him, to envy Miss O'Hara for captivating, and to hate her for not caring about him. Whilst Mrs. Preston, firm to her one opinion, because it was her secret wish, kept quietly saying, "Oh, very well! We shall see, six months hence. I only hope Captain Fitz Arthur will never think of asking *me* to marry him, for depend upon it, I shall forget I am sixty."

A general laugh at Mrs. Preston's way of recommending her favourite, turned the almost serious attack upon Honoria into a jest ; and she was bearing her part pretty successfully in the bantering to and fro, when the horses of the Misses Mulcaster, and their brother, were announced.

All within doors was bustle and good-byes,—picking up of whips,—and floundering through long-skirted habits ; whilst from without, was heard the prancing and pulling up of the horses, which the groom chose to show off in great style, to the delight of various dogs,

big and little, who were yelping and jumping round their heels.

"Never attempt to run the county, Sophy!" exclaimed Mr. Mulcaster, as he passed to the gates whence all this uproar was heard and seen; "for any fool may track you. Always with a string of puppies after you, either two-legged or four-legged, like a Highland chief with his tail on. What bores you girls are! I pass my life in flogging your yelping dogs, and shying your stupid admirers. Why don't you get married at once, and rid me of such infernal plagues?"

"Of course, it is for the sake of obliging you in this particular, that your sister accumulates her number of admirers," observed Honoria, "that she may have more choice."

"You never were more mistaken in your days!" exclaimed Mr. Mulcaster, who piqued himself upon appearing to care nothing for his sisters, whom he really loved, and had a pride in. "The girl never makes any fellows in love with her,—and she don't want it. Only let her have a score of idle dangles at her beck and call, upon all occasions, and that's enough for her! She marry! 'I give thee sixpence! I'll see thee—ha, hum, ha'd first.' I must not swear, you see, Miss O'Hara, even by quotation. Parody the passage! parody the passage!" And whistling with more light-heartedness than refinement, Mr. Mulcaster strode before his sisters through the side gate. Then, after duly patting and praising his sleek mare, calling her dear slut, and insisting upon Miss O'Hara's doing the same, he assisted his sisters to mount,—settled their stirrups, their petticoats, and what he called all the rest of their *horrid tackle*; and bestowing sundry benedictions upon *the inventors of women*, and sundry denunciations upon the barking dogs, rode away with the happy carelessness of look, which made Honoria exclaim, as she involuntarily contrasted it in her remembrance with the varying eyes and cheek of poor Fitz Arthur, "That boy in love!"

The party on horseback cantered off to Shafto Place;

the young ladies had a visit to return. The brother intended to parade the poems of his friend, by description and eulogium : the poems themselves being left in Miss O'Hara's hand for quick perusal. The day was exactly such a one as tempts people in the country to pay visits ; so Mrs. Shafto was at home, and her daughters were "somewhere about the house or grounds." Miss Shafto looked best in a bonnet, *she* was out of doors ; and of course kept on her hat when called in. Miss Augusta's nose had the infirmity of getting red at the tip whenever she was hurried, or heated, or cold,—so she was sitting very still at an upright piano-forte. Miss Matilda's stupid face always wanted a fillip ; therefore, she was discovered arranging portfolios of caricatures. The mother was loitering about her conservatory, from which, as it communicated immediately with the morning sitting room, she returned, on the Misses Mulcaster being announced, to her seat at a little ornamental table, where lay the very identical book Mr. William Mulcaster came to puff. Near it stood Mr. Tudor, the smart, obsequious, pedantic Mr. Tudor, making alumets and similes at the same moment.

Nothing could equal Mr. Mulcaster's mortification at finding himself thus forestalled : however, he took up the volume. Before he could speak, Mrs. Shafto, glancing flatteringly towards him, after welcoming his sisters, exclaimed, "Pray, don't waste your agreeableness over that new publication, Mr. Mulcaster ! we see you so seldom, that really we cannot spare a moment of you. And it is very indifferent, I assure you : pretty—rather pretty—one of the things,—a battle-piece, I think, or the Earthquake—which was it we thought pretty, Mr. Tudor ?—pretty enough !"

"A battle-piece pretty !" repeated Mr. Mulcaster, lifting up his hands and eyes

"The appellation is not incorrect, sir," observed Mr. Tudor, anxious to vindicate the critical acumen of a lady. "The writer of these verses has none of the true *furor poeticus* ; none of that *felicitas in verbis seligendis exquisita*, that *sententiæ acres satyrum et facetum*

epitaphs, which would enable him to astonish and intimidate. Where will you find in his poor volume such passages as these?"

Here Mr. Tudor bore down upon the late student of All Souls with such a broadside of quotations and parallel passages, that his shattered opponent was soon obliged to haul his wind and sheer off: he had no way of escape from the bore of rubbing up rusty learning except by allowing himself to be bantered about one of the county beauties; a practice invariably followed by Miss Shafto; who, having once had designs upon the gentleman, was now never weary of proving her complete indifference to all his concerns.

William Mulcaster was at that age when young men like to give publicity to their love, and to the name of its object: and as the goddess of Mr. Mulcaster's worship had a noble preface to her baptismal appellation, he was the less unwilling to hear that name coupled with his own. The fair Lady Catherine too, was not so cruel as to dislike hearing of her cruelty from any person good-natured enough to gratify girlish vanity, by talking to her of herself, and of Mr. Mulcaster.

Thus, both the adorer and the adored were what they called *quizzed* about each other; and neither of them showed violent displeasure in consequence. All but the couple themselves, therefore, were quite sure it would be a match: they knew their own hearts better.

Mr. Mulcaster now delivered himself over to the flattering *badinage* of Mrs. Shafto. Yet once or twice he endeavoured to resume the subject of Mr. Peter Gubbins and his poems.

Mrs. Shafto was not in luck; she did not perceive the interest her guest took in the subject, though he recurred to it.

"My dear Mr. Mulcaster!" she exclaimed, as she went on rolling and pinching the slips of pink paper, which Mr. Tudor was carefully cutting for her important manufacture; "don't insist upon our admiring a book, written by any one with two such names,—he must be an under sort of person; and really, really,"

(looking round the room with an affectation of search,) "I may say it here—I cannot think elegant compositions of any kind can proceed from any pen but a gentleman's: so do let us talk of a much pleasanter thing; one more in your own way. Have you heard that our great neighbours are coming among us again? Some of the Wearmouth family are positively coming from Lord Sarum's, to be at Ravenshaw while the races are going on."

"Are they indeed?" exclaimed Mr. Mulcaster. "I bet six to two my friend Gubbins is of the party,—Mr. Peter Gubbins."

"Indeed!" re-echoed the lady of the mansion. "Is he a person of that style?"

In spite of Mrs. Shafto's foregone complacent attention to his oft-repeated "Lady Catherine said," and "Lady Catherine was going," Mr. Mulcaster was so ungratefully piqued at the slight thrown upon his fellow-student's talents, that, turning upon her with the air of *you shall get no more out of me*, he gravely answered, "I hope you find nothing very astonishing, Mrs. Shafto, in a friend of mine being a friend of Lord Wearmouth's!"

Mrs. Shafto was overwhelmed; self-convicted of extreme ill-breeding. Never had she been so completely thrown off her guard. To get handsomely out of the scrape was impossible, unless she sacrificed truth. Hers was a life of sacrifice in that way: so now, assuming perfect ease, she said, smilingly, "I was a little surprised at your poet being either a statesman or a man on the turf—that was all. He may be neither, though he is Lord Wearmouth's acquaintance, and coming down to these races. Emilia, do you happen to know which of the Wearmouth family are coming to Ravenshaw?"

This question was asked with that air of indifference to every common and uncommon occurrence, which it is so peculiarly the province of a sated and fashionable life to bestow; which Mrs. Shafto therefore assumed; and which, from having previously acquainted herself

with the particulars she was inquiring into, she gave in most felicitous style.

Miss Shafto put up her glass to hear the question. "I think, while she was dressing me to-day, Thompson told me——"

"How sure all waiting-maids' names are to be Thompson, or Johnson, or some such vulgar name!" interposed Mr. Mulcaster.

Mrs. Shafto smiled on him with more than her usual suavity. Such a smile ought to have put him in good-humour with her for life. But a man deep in flirtation with a Lady Catherine, could not easily forgive the insult of having been deemed unworthy the acquaintance of the acquaintance of a noble earl: and he kept sturdily stiff, not even bending his head in sign of thankfulness.

Miss Shafto's offended air reproved him for the rudeness of breaking in upon her reply to her mother. She went on: "I think Thompson told me, Lord Wearmouth himself is coming, with the Dowager; and Lord Francis Fitz James, one of young Lady Wearmouth's cousins; and a good many more people, whose names she had not heard. I really forget, though.—Mr. Tudor, do be so good as put away that tuberoses; it is so overpowering!"—And by this little commission, Miss Shafto intended at once to confirm her indifference to the titled party in prospect, and her thorough disregard of Mr. Mulcaster. Mr. Tudor's hasty obedience nearly over-set him. He was recompensed for momentary confusion by the liberal display of his white hands and his invaluable onyx, which the removal of the unwieldy garden pot afforded.

Mrs. Shafto meanwhile had quietly risen from her seat, crossed the room, either for her work-bag, or solely for the purpose of being arrested in passing a window by the sight of Mr. Mulcaster's mare, which she declared was the most complete and beautiful animal she had ever seen. At first she kindly bestowed it upon Mr. Tudor; then observed two ladies' horses leading about also; so prettily recollected that it *might*

be Mr. Mulcaster's—nay, it *must* be Mr. Mulcaster's, for she always heard gentlemen speak of *him* as the best judge of a horse in the county.

Mr. Mulcaster's ill-humour must have been dyed in grain, for it abated not a jot of its blackness after this pungent compliment. However, the lady reseated herself, with dauntless placidity, and once more addressed him :—" I shall look over these poems again with quite a new feeling, since you say their writer is a friend of yours, though I am past the age, I acknowledge, of admiring poetry with such animation as younger people do ; but my girls, I suspect, have the taste of their age ; and if your friend were only a poet, would be delighted to know him. As *your* friend, I put in my claim for his acquaintance,—you must let me owe the gratification of making his acquaintance to you,—you must do me the favour of bringing him to Shafto Place."

Mrs. Shafto did not doubt that the poet was a man of family, since he was admitted to the domestic circle of Lord Wearmouth ; and if not worth marrying himself, might be a great help in other ways—such as writing and circulating little complimentary songs upon her daughters, swelling their train of admirers, if such train existed, &c. &c. ; and her repeated *you musts* were all said with most insinuating humility.

Both the Misses Mulcaster, thinking of hops and the city, burst into a fit of laughter ; vainly trying to get out a few words which would have ended the lady's solicitations at once ; but their brother's quick and commanding frown chained their tongues, and he said carelessly, " I shall certainly tell my friend what you say ; but he is such a spoiled child, that I assure you he goes nowhere from mere civility,—he will know nobody, till he sees whether he likes them or not."

" Oh, William !" ejaculated his sister Jane.

" 'Tis the fact, however, Miss Janet, in spite of your little ignorant exclamation. A man may be in the same room a million of times with a set of quizzes, and hear all their stuff and nonsense, without being obliged to know them. It would be desperately hard, as the

world goes now, if one must be introduced to all the bores, and lions, and puppies, that tag after our old maiden aunts, and young maiden sisters !”

Mr. Mulcaster saw Mrs. Shafto's colour rise, though she still preserved the usual fawning courtliness of her countenance. He still owed her a grudge ; and though past the age of throwing stones and soaping staircases out of pure waggishness, he yet enjoyed a bigger bit of mischief. Turning suddenly and spritely round to his sisters, he exclaimed, “ Girls ! what will you bet that the pretty Honor O'Hara does not catch Gubbins ?”

“ Is your friend so susceptible then ?” asked Mrs. Shafto, scarcely able to command her looks any longer : “ or perhaps *you* think that young lady pre-eminently beautiful !”

Such a report did not suit Mr. Mulcaster's views in another quarter ; and he replied, in some confusion, “ No—yes—I think her extremely pretty ; though I don't generally like dark eyes.” The eyes of Lady Catherine, our sagacious readers must guess, were light.

“ I am quite of your opinion,” returned the able mistress of the mansion. “ Black eyes certainly give rather too assured a look to a woman's face, which, I believe, you gentlemen say, ought always to be soft and retiring. I remember your godfather, Sir Harry Jessop (who, by the way, was one of the most refined judges of his day, in these matters I mean,) used to remark that they were fit only for a milkmaid. How well I recollect his admiration of Lady Hexham's eyes when she was just married !—so *very* soft—so *very* blue—so unlike all other eyes, except her *very* charming daughter's !”

Mr. Mulcaster did not yet flinch, though the Countess of Hexham was mother to Lady Catherine. He was intended for a Senator ; and this sample of his resolute stand against bribery, ought to have been given on the hustings to his constituents.

Bowing cavalierly to Mrs. Shafto, he begged to represent his godfather's ghost, while thanking her for the compliment to his memory ; then pursuing his determination of provoking her, resumed about Miss O'Hara.

"I think she will just suit our poet's taste. Then I shall take care to tell him how she devoured his poems this morning, never asking whether he were a peer or a ploughman. That touch will have a great effect upon him : for if he were a peer, he would hate to be *toadied* about his rank, full as much as he does now about his genius."

Mrs. Shafto treasured up this useful hint concerning the poet ; but as it took her some instants to digest the bitter emphasis with which Mr. Mulcaster had uttered the word *toadied*, Mr. Tudor found opportunity to say with forced indifference, while his visage fluctuated between green and white, "some of your friend's verses lead me to conjecture he has no heart to bestow, even upon Miss O'Hara—so what think you of proposing Lord Francis Fitz James for her?"

This was meant for a pleasantry, and taken accordingly. The Misses Mulcaster glanced at each other, and laughed ; the Misses Shafto severally threw back their heads in due rotation, with a due portion of contemptuous pity ; the eldest coldly drawling out, "Now pray, Mr. Tudor, don't be too severe on that poor girl!"

"Many a heart's caught on the rebound, they say," exclaimed Mr. Mulcaster ; "and I say, sought into the bargain! Eh, Miss Shafto! eh, Tudor!"—(Miss Shafto was indignant scarlet ; Mr. Tudor was rainbow confusion.)—"So if my friend Gubbins *has* had his heart trampled on by one woman, it is no reason why he should not lodge it in the kinder arms of another. And as to Tudor's idea of Lord Francis, it is quite capital : I am determined forthwith to adopt it, and shall with all speed stride off, and desire Miss O'Hara to sharpen her best arrows for both the Lord and the Bard."

"Are you not a little afraid, my dear Mr. Mulcaster," observed Mrs. Shafto, with an air of affected benevolence, "that such a flattering injunction, from one of our admired young men, may tend to turn that pretty little head? Surely it is cruel to excite hopes

and wishes impossible to have realized! The poor thing has neither family, fortune, nor, I fear, education, (as we now understand that very comprehensive word,) to allow of any really well-born person's thinking seriously of her; pretty, very pretty, and pleasing as she is. I am truly sorry for her. Mrs. Meredith, though an excellent vulgar woman, is a vulgar woman—quite out of the question of being visited: so who could marry such a woman's niece? I am not afraid of saying I think connexion is every thing in marriage. If Lord Francis Fitz James followed *my* advice, Mr. Mulcaster, I fear," (smiling with a most caressing air of mock threatening,) he would enter the lists against *you*, for the favour of a certain very high bred, elegant young woman in his own set."

Mr. Mulcaster was fairly beat: the flattery and the intimidation, were too much for his resolution, to go on vexing her. Happily his youngest sister's voluble ardour came to his aid. "Take care, Mrs. Shafto," she archly exclaimed. "Take care of what you say of Mrs. Meredith. I can tell you, if that will at all save her, that *we* visit her now; and I think there is one, rather connected with you, that would very willingly make Miss O'Hara your relation, if she would give him leave to do so."

Mrs. Shafto was all astonishment,—sincere astonishment. She looked astonishment,—she expressed astonishment: the very *alumét* quivered between her finger and thumb with astonishment. "What could Miss Jane Mulcaster mean?"

The blooming girl had something of her brother's hardihood of character, and though her Euphrosyne smiles disappeared before the chilling look of the questioner, she persisted in explaining. "Every body could see," she said, "that Captain Fitz Arthur was dying for Miss O'Hara, and that she was cruelly insensible to him. This was quite evident, for he was always so low and embarrassed in her company; and she was so gayly at her ease in his."

"Our cousin Delaval Fitz Arthur dying for Miss

O'Hara! *our* cousin!" was repeated all down the file of the Misses Shafto at the same moment, in different keys. Disdain and disbelief was meant to be the expression of each; but the eldest sister's sharp alt was the successful one.

Mrs. Shafto had now quelled herself. "Will you permit me to give you a different version of such observations?" she asked graciously. "I have Sir Everard's authority for saying his son's views are in another quarter. And no wonder, where there is such loveliness, and *will* be so much fortune. The young lady you speak of, has of course *her* views in playing the agreeable before the heir of Arthur's Court. Idly calculating upon her being a favourite with the good old Baronet, and not being in the secret of this old India flame, she hopes to succeed; but I venture to say, both father and son may patronize her, when they would be shocked to hear a hint of such degradation as you speak of, Miss Jane. I am not at liberty to enter fully into Captain Fitz Arthur's present plans and prospects. Thus much I will say, I am vastly sorry if this young person is so very much set up by injudicious notice, as to fancy she dare attempt the conquest of the heir of a baronetcy; and I only pray you will pardon me, if I own to being a little,—a very little, affronted at the bare idea of such a person declining the future possessor of Arthur's Court. It is very amiable in you to patronize this young person,—so natural to a good heart! but you are just as likely to make a bosom friend of one so completely out of your own set, as any man of birth and fashion is to marry her."

Mrs. Shafto's astrologer ought to have learned his lesson from Cæsar's; he should have bid her "beware of March." On this memorable morning she was singularly unfortunate. Miss Jane Mulcaster's cheeks blazed through the thick clusters of gold-brown hair which vainly tried to hide their resentful colour, and intercept the sudden anger of her generally gladsome eyes. She boldly avowed a strict friendship with Miss O'Hara, commenced she confessed at the Arthur's

Court ball : where, though she had talked little with Miss O'Hara, she had heard and seen so much of her delightfulness to others, that she never rested till she got her papa to let them all ride over and call at the Rectory. She was quite sorry St. Cuthbert's was such a way off Edenfell,—eight miles ! but for that, they must have met so often before, and found out how much they should like one another ! As to her papa, the Dean, he was enchanted with Miss O'Hara's charming countenance and natural manners. For her part, Miss Jane wondered that all the men were not dying for Miss O'Hara, as well as Captain Fitz Arthur."

"But, my dear Jane !" interposed her better disciplined sister, "Mrs. Shafto assures you, Captain Fitz Arthur has no thought of our pretty friend ; pray don't be so positive," and she made a signal look, by way of bidding her sister give up the point, and keep the opinion. The honest-hearted Jane paid no attention to it, resuming eagerly :— "Well ! all I will say for a certainty, is, that if Captain Fitz Arthur ever does propose, he will not be accepted : for Honoria never will marry any person she don't care about, to the greatest degree ; and I know she is not in the least attached to him."

"When Captain Fitz Arthur *does* propose, Miss Jane," returned Mrs. Shafto, actually shivering with repressed violence, "*you* will allow *me* to be quite as certain, that he will *not* be refused."

"So people said about Mr. Frazer," Jane resumed, out of breath with good-natured earnestness ; "and yet you see *he* was turned away."

"Did the young lady tell you so ?" inquired Mrs. Shafto insidiously. "One would not credit it otherwise."

"O, no ! but one may guess,—one may be sure."

"My dear, warm-hearted, generous Miss Jane, allow an older woman,—a much older woman than yourself, to be a little skeptical on such subjects. I do not doubt Miss O'Hara's pretensions to beauty ; but Mr. Frazer was evidently *not* a marrying man, even

supposing she was a proper connexion. Had he been so, there were a few faces in the county that I shall name, if you provoke me," (playfully looking up at her Hebe face,) "among people of his own class, that must have secured him before he saw Miss O'Hara's."

The blooming Jane was not so remorseless and unappeasable as her brother. She knew herself to be one of the county beauties, and she looked blushing aside; then rallying back her spirit, dauntlessly repeated, "Well! for all that, I will still maintain that Miss O'Hara refused Mr. Frazer."

"Gentlemen must take care then, how they propose to your pretty friend, it seems, for more reasons than one;" observed Mrs. Shafto, obliquely glancing at a table covered with fashionable trifles, to which Mr. Tudor had retreated at the commencement of this conversation, and where he now stood curiously examining a gold thimble, as if tasked to make one.

"Mr. Tudor, will you be so very good as give me that thimble? I was just going to look for it, and show Miss Sophia Mulcaster a new sort of satin-stitch I have learned from Lady Henderson. Mr. Mulcaster, what are you taking up your hat for? Now you have done all possible mischief to poor Matilda's classification of these ridiculous prints! I wonder, Mr. Tudor, if the Roman ladies used thimbles."

Mr. Tudor, lifted at once from his present insignificance and recent confusion, and lifted too upon his hobby-horse, set off full gallop; and even the rival images of the openly scornful Miss O'Hara, and the covertly encouraging Miss Shafto, were immediately run down. He was full cry after authorities and grounds for opinions: and had already named every Latin author, whose name had heretofore struck terror into the soul of the young collegian, when the latter started up, and called on his sisters to wish Mrs. Shafto good day.

"I hear the awful roll of a carriage! O those confounded curs of yours, Sophy!" he exclaimed, as the shrill yelping of some,—the hoarse baying of others,—

and the low growl of a muzzled mastiff belonging to the house, were heard mingling with the sound of wheels. "What with their noise, and Mr. Tudor's learning, my brain is fairly bothered. Every one of those brutes, from this day forth, will always seem to me to be barking in Latin; and Mr. Tudor, when he speaks, bow-wow-ing. Association of ideas, Mr. Tudor, you know.—Man is the victim of associations."

The light-hearted William gave his sister Jane's arm such a tight squeeze against his side, as he uttered this boyish sarcasm, under the mask of Mr. Tudor's own pomposity, that she cried out; and in the confusion of her scream, Mrs. Shafto's polite solicitude, and the announcement of fresh visitors, the brother and sisters finally escaped to their horses.

Mrs. Shafto looked after the party for a moment, with an emotion rather like compassion. "Poor, unfashioned creatures!" she thought; "it is evident they have no mother!" And she turned to simper upon, and flatter her second set of visitors, with the proud consciousness of having rendered *her* girls as sharp-sighted to their own little interests, and as coldly indifferent to every other human beings, as nature had made herself.

Meanwhile, Mr. Mulcaster was exclaiming, "How I do abominate toadies and lick-spittles!"

"And don't you think Mrs. Shafto returns the compliment, by abominating impudent, ill-mannered boys?" asked one smiling sister, as they cantered along.

"Well, if she does, I can tell you her aversion warms my heart. Such a scarecrow as she is, to all heart and heartiness! Such a cankered heap of envy and malice, and flattery and falseness, and flummery and frippery, and—" "William! William!"

"I do delight in humbugging and mystifying her! Did you mark, girls, how I worked her about Miss O'Hara? and what a fuss she was in when she found my friend Gubbins was *good company*. Such fools as she, are enough to put one out of humour with family and breeding, and all that my dear quiz of a father

calls 'the salutary distinctions of society.' One week in Mrs. Shafto's society would drive me into binding myself apprentice to a butcher or a tailor ; but I have not done with her yet."

"I protest she has made you quite savage to-day !" observed the sprightly Sophia.

Mr. Mulcaster abruptly checked his horse, as if going to turn about. "By the white hands of Mr. Tudor," he exclaimed, "I've a great mind to ride back, merely to tell her to abuse Gubbin's poems to Lord Francis Fitz James. I'll tell her he thinks them poor stuff,—there'll be a kettle ! For he and Gubbins are inseparable friends."

"O fie, William !" cried his favourite sister, "planning a fib for the sake of tormenting a person. You, the son of a clergyman !"

"Pshaw ! I wish I was the son a tinker, if my father's trade is to keep me in awe. I am not planning a fib, Miss Janet : Fitz James does not think any thing of Gubbins's verses ; yet he has such a regard for the fellow, that I am much mistaken if he'll like to hear his genius questioned by an old rag-doll like Mrs. Shafto."

"William ! William !" repeated Sophia, "you have got such a trick of saying that old rag-doll when you speak of Mrs. Shafto, and swearing by the white hands of Mr. Tudor, that I am in terror every instant you will say it to themselves."

"And don't you think it would do them both, lots of good ?" asked the positive William. "Mrs. Shafto might then leave off painting her face with whiting, which I'm sure she cribs from the maids for cheapness ; and Tudor might give up the villanous practice of poulticing his paws every night. Horrid monster !"

"But you perverse boy !" cried his elder sister, "why will you persist in believing Mrs. Shafto paints white ? Did you ever yet hear of a woman painting herself a regular ghost-colour ?"

"Pshaw ! I tell you she does it to look genteel : she thinks colour so very unladylike." (Mimicking her.) "And as to Tudor, I only wish I had him and his pap

and panada hands at Eton, and I one of the fifth form again ; see if we would not tattoo them a right goblin black. Look at this hand, girls !” (thrusting forth a palm, garnished with a set of long elegant fingers, that might once have honoured the roseate-handed morn ;) “I hope I’ve cheated the family complexion. Look ! behold the blessed effects of cricketing, rowing, sparring, clambering, bell-ringing, cooking, driving, and flogging your confounded dogs ; who’d say these hands were cut out of the same cloth with your little pinks and whites ?”

“Who, indeed !” reiterated the laughing Jane, drawing off her glove, and placing a hand more delicate than a flower, by the side of his tanned one.

The affectionate brother gave it a fond squeeze, which he suddenly changed into a screw ; so much of the boy was there still in his ripening manliness. “Come, you stand the torture bravely !” he cried. “You look all the prettier for it,—it has made you blow out like a full-blown rose. Jane, I’ve a great mind to kiss you, where you sit, on the back of your mare, (which, by the way, you are now sitting with the grace of a corn sack,) I’ve a great mind to kiss you, for having given that whited-wall, that pale pyramid, such a famous set down about Miss O’Hara.”

There were not lighter hearts in the county than those of the Misses Mulcaster : and at this compliment to Jane, both sisters burst out a laughing. But Sophia quickly recovering herself, and believing that three years difference in their ages, imposed upon her the disagreeable duty of lecturing Jane occasionally, hastened to remind her of her over-eagerness in the dispute with Mrs. Shafto. She said many meritorious things upon the propriety of deference to older persons,—upon the possibility of preserving truth and politeness at the same time,—of the injury so often done to a friend by being too vehement in their cause ; and she instanced Jane’s positive assertion concerning Mr. Frazer’s refusal, when the former only gathered it from some vague expression in a note of his, to their father.

Miss Sophia took care to add, it was evident Mrs. Shafto would make the most of this indiscretion, and go about saying Miss O'Hara was either a false boaster, or a most dishonourable young woman.

Poor Jane had not a word to say for herself; the crimes of positiveness and imprudence were proved upon her: and she could only repeat, "I am very sorry." But her brother clamoured in her behalf, if he could not argue; till, by main force of lungs and ludicrous epithets, aided by sundry tremendous seeming lashes at Sophia's dogs, he fairly silenced his sister's reluctant reproofs.

This young man had all the materials in him for building up a most valuable character; as yet, these lay in notable disorder, the rubbish uppermost. He was not twenty, and with inherent love of *the true* in every thing, *detested*, as he termed it, every body who was false. His was the age of vehement indignation and relentless justice: and had he been elected king, his first public act would have been, to have had Mrs. Shafto whipped at the cart's tail throughout his dominions.

With common inconsistency, however, William Mulcaster assumed something himself; he affected a tone of roughness and rudeness with sisters he doated upon, —and spoke of a father he loved and revered, too often, as if he were speaking of an old hunk.

Having caught the fashionable cant of denominating every displayed good feeling *humbug*, he (what he called,) *bullied* the expression of each; therefore went on doing the humanest things, with an air of pettish humour.

If during rides or walks he saw a sheep cast, or a young bird fall down from the nest, he was sure to stop, and turn the one, or climb to replace the other; always exclaiming, however, "There! I suppose I *must* go and help these brutes, or I shall have no peace with you foolish girls!"

As he was never willingly without one or other of his sisters, he was sometimes complimented upon being a good brother. On such occasions, he never failed turning upon the luckless complimenter, and goring

them with the outcry of, "I fond of the girls!—Never was man more heartily tired of a set of women, tagging after him like so many imps tormenting a big fiend! Here I go, hawking them all over the county, and not a creature will take them off my hands. The fellows are too knowing." Mr. Mulcaster might safely hazard such a declaration, since his sisters were notoriously the county belles.

The Misses Mulcaster had the misfortune of being motherless, which may account for a certain wildness in their family habits. The finest natural qualities need the training hand of judicious watchfulness.

As their father looked rather to the solid than the brilliant in their education, they were deficient in dazzling accomplishments. Not one of them played, or sung, or danced, a whit better than girls with ordinary ears and voices were likely to do under the tuition of provincial masters. They could read French easily, but not lard their conversation with it. They were not ignorant upon any one subject of art or literature, but they were learned in none.

Yet, in spite of this mediocrity of acquirements, they made St. Cuthberts so pleasant, that it might vie with Mrs. Preston's house in the number of its daily visitors.

After all, natural good sense, good humour, and good spirits are women's staples. If men would speak out, they would confess, that to be always admiring is very fatiguing; and that nine times out of ten, they would prefer the light amusement of general conversation, to the weighty demands of first-rate music, or the toilsome task of attending to an eloquent harangue.

Since the death of her mother, the eldest Miss Mulcaster had governed her father's house, without attempting to govern her sisters; she was mild and affectionate, solicitous to make her sisters happy, and careless of her own gratifications. At seven and twenty, with the complexion of seventeen, a lovely figure, and a Madonna countenance, she chose to consider herself as of matron age; and, in that persuasion, felt and looked solely anxious to have other girls seen and admired. She was,

of course, her father's principal companion : and tenderly beloved by all for whom her influence with him, procured indulgences.

Sophia, the second sister, was showy and attractive : she liked to be busy, and amused and amusing ; she delighted in being the centre of a circle, either of men, women, children, or dumb animals. She had the art of pleasing them all, and keeping them all in good humour, —perhaps because she did not excite strong emotions. Nothing could be more elegant than her person, or prettier than the play of her countenance. The pretty expressions of the latter, indeed, made very indifferent pleasantries pass for wit, as she uttered them ; and her admirers were accustomed to speak of her, therefore, as singularly entertaining. Of admirers the fair Sophia had crowds, for it had become a county fashion, to make one of the train that were at her orders, and followed her to ball, race, or walk, striving for no more substantial favour at her hands, than the momentary preference of being bid to carry her shawl, or pick up her fan. With this sort of admiration, Sophia Mulcaster was so thoroughly satisfied, that a shrewd relation secretly prophesied she would be the only old maid in the family.

Henrietta, the third girl, was less striking, but infinitely more endearing when known. In large parties, she smiled and observed, and said little ; but with the chosen few, she was demurely comic, if not sportive ; and the timid, down-looking eye was then raised with an arch humour, which was often irresistible.

Jane, the youngest, had more positive character and beauty, than any one of her sisters : she was all bloom, buoyancy, freshness, and mirthfulness : an extravagance of good-nature and good-humour, with what are called *tearing spirits*, made her the joy of the house, and the favourite of their neighbourhood.

In the inclination to give, Jane was bounty itself : her yearly allowance was always exhausted before it was due ; her charities were indiscriminate, it must be owned, as she never staid to inquire into a case of distress,

before she relieved it ; but her gifts of mere good-will, though nearly as numerous, were bestowed on fewer persons. Never could she bear to go to a friend empty-handed ; when she did not bring them a pre-determined present, it was a ring instantaneously snatched off her finger, or a bracelet off her arm, or an ornamented comb out of her hair, or the plume from her hat : in short a tour among her favourites, would at any time send Jane Mulcaster home, stripped of every personal decoration.

Jane had *been out* only one year, yet in that short time, it was whispered, she had been as liberal of her heart as of her trinkets. This, however, was a cruel calumny ; the blooming Jane having only been too obviously sorry for two pleasing men, whom neither she herself, nor her father, liked well enough to admit into their family.

Such were the children of the excellent Dean of ————, who were now cantering homewards over roads like life, rough and smooth by turns ; entering into an offensive league against the mistress of Shafto Place, and determining to *stand up* for Miss O'Hara, because that scheming personage evidently sought to *put her down*.

CHAPTER VII.

WITH as little notice of every natural beauty he had passed on his way to Hazeldean, as he then bestowed on them, did Captain Fitz Arthur now retrace the same paths. For some time his thoughts were full of Honoria,—again, he thrilled with those momentary glances which had kindled as brief a transport,—again, he dwelt with saddening intentness upon her rekindled interest in her champion, the new poet.

It was too obvious that her heart was yet fluttering, untaken, and uncertain, though longing with natural in-

stinct to wing its way to some sheltering breast ; as obvious, that such shelter was not to be, could never be, his fondly yearning bosom ! Under such conviction, he strove not to think of her.

Every step he now took towards his home, certainly distanced her image : darker interests usurped the tender ones of love ; whilst at each turning of meadow or road, the figure of the stranger he had seen on the avenue at Arthur's Court, seemed to rise before him.

That ill-omened countenance threatened so much of distress and disgrace to all he loved, that he felt it had now become his duty to speak upon the subject to his father, and learn what they had yet to dread from this suspected relation.

To prevent the frustration of this wise resolution, Fitz Arthur went, immediately upon entering the house, to his brother Hylton's apartments, to inquire if he would not take advantage of so fine an afternoon, and drive over to Hazeldean.

One of Fitz Arthur's additions to his poor brother's means of exercise and amusement, had been a little four-wheeled open carriage, drawn by one sure-footed horse ; and he now urged him to use it, under John Abbot's care ; promising, that if he should stay to take an early tea at Mrs. Preston's, he would himself come and drive him back.

Fitz Arthur was aware that if Hylton remained at home, (though he always dined at a much earlier hour than the rest of the family,) he would in some measure prove an obstacle to the wished-for confidence : since it was not the custom either of Sir Everard or himself, to absent themselves long from this object of their mutual solicitude ; and Hylton himself, was ever eager to accept his father's challenge to chess, or his brother's to some amusing exercise of memory. Having previously ascertained that Miss O'Hara was not going to spend the day at Hazeldean, and that Mrs. Preston was not going any where else, he now continued to talk of the green hedges, and the balmy air, till Hylton was roused from that lassitude of body and mind too com-

mon with invalids, and led to give his assent: the low carriage was then ordered: and having seen him comfortably seated, and fairly off, he retired to make some slight alteration in his own dress.

The last dinner bell had ceased; and the orderly steps of the butler, with his weight of soup and silver, were heard crossing the hall, followed by three of his satellites, bearing dishes of lesser consequence, ere Fitz Arthur descended from his room. He had certainly not been looking in the glass all that time: neither had he left his servant ruefully contemplating twenty *failures*, in the shape of so many neckcloths, ill-tied, or clumsily folded. He had been thinking of any thing but himself. So absorbed was he, in settling and altering the way in which he meant to commence his painful inquiry, that even during dinner, his abstraction continued; he was not aware of this himself, therefore was not prepared for his father's remarks upon such unusual seriousness.

The moment Mrs. Fothergill was withdrawn, and their plain wines set upon the table, Sir Everard pressed his son to say what had put him so sadly out of spirits. Ending with the affectionate pleasantry of, "I hope you have no reason to fear your fair mistress will refuse you, when you get my consent to ask her?"

At that instant Fitz Arthur's complexion might have been envied by any pale beauty in Europe; he stammered something that sounded very like words, without being words.

Sir Everard, not a whit the wiser on the subject, continued in the same fatherly tone: "On my life, Delaval, I shall be just as willing to give my consent as old Mrs. Letitia herself. Do you think I would have let you ride twice over to visit them, if the good old lady had not said quite enough to me the night they were here, to show what she wished for her heiress? Faith, when you were dancing together on our ball-night, she asked me if I did not think you would make a proper pair for something better than a dance."

"Sir, I don't understand—who are you speaking of,

pray?" inquired his son, in greater confusion and agitation.

"Come, come, Delaval, don't pretend ignorance. Who should I be talking of, except Mrs. Letitia Branspeth and Miss Clavering? I always thought when you were in India, from what you used to write about her, that you were a little smitten with your general's daughter. Well—well! another year, and our estates will have worked round; and she will have seen enough of Vanity-fair, and all the nonsense they take girls to now-a-days; and after that she'll settle down into a good house-governing wife, like your dear mother. So wait till we are a little clear, and then you shall put the question. We'll go with our six horses on that errand, I can tell you."

Here, I must beg leave to inform every dashing young lover, who may do me the honour of skimming these pages, that Sir Everard Fitz Arthur, when he spoke of going *a courting* with six horses, had not the most distant idea of tearing off in the hack-chaise-Gretna-green-style, they suppose. He was very properly thinking of the state-coach, and the state-pace of six stately grays.

By the time his father's little harangue was ended, the son's face was as white as it had just before been red. "Be easy, dear sir," he said, in rather a husky voice, affecting composure: "I am never likely to put myself in the way of what I might be pretty sure of—a refusal—were I to ask the hand of Miss Clavering. I give you my word, I never fancied myself in the least *smitten* with her, even in India, where I knew her heart had never felt any prepossession. My two visits to Lady Henderson's, while she and Mrs. Branspeth were staying there, were more for her late father's sake than her own, highly, almost affectionately, as I regard her.—I am not given to fall in love, I assure you." (Fitz Arthur sighed, in spite of himself, as he emphasized the words.)—"At this moment something of a much weightier nature occupies me.—I own my mind is exceedingly disturbed—distressed. I wish to ask my fa-

ther a question ; and I fear to pain, perplex, perhaps displease.—A person I saw by chance this morning ——” Fitz Arthur would not go further.

“Delaval !” exclaimed the Baronet, holding out his hand to him, yet with a deep glow mounting to his very brow, “when didst thou ever do any one of these willingly?—Speak boy, speak out!—What is it thou art afraid to say, or I am to be afraid of hearing?”

The colour deepened on the father’s forehead, and the son remained silent. The former was the first to break the awkward pause ; he struck his hand suddenly upon the table, exclaiming, “I’ll bet my Chloe against your whelp there, that Wilhelm has been prating—he has told you all about Stephen !”

Fitz Arthur felt an unaccountable qualm come over him—actual sickness : such is the mysterious force of mind ! His ashy face presented a striking contrast to the crimson colouring of his father’s, while replying in a smothered tone : “Wilhelm has not explained any thing to me, my dearest father ! but I encountered a well-dressed man in the walnut-avenue, whose appearance there, occupied as he was, in counting notes, made me apprehensive that—that my father has some pecuniary perplexity still, from which he excludes his son ; may I say, a son ready to submit to the mortification of knowing no more than that honoured parent chooses to tell ; nay, of asking no more, should he be told it must be so ; a son that only wishes to be made useful—to be allowed to stand between his father—and—unnatural imposition perhaps !”—(Here Fitz Arthur faltered and paused.) “For your own sake, dear sir ;” for my young brother’s sake ——”

He stopt abruptly, and affectionately pressing his father’s hand, held it as affectionately to his lips. Never once did he raise his eyes to the face he concluded must now be doubly-dyed with the colours of shame.

“And prithee, Delaval,” asked Sir Everard in a moderately embarrassed tone, which his son could not help thinking would have better honoured his years and character had it been more embarrassed, “Where then

did you hear, if not from Wilhelm, that this poor misbegotten plagued me for money?"

Fitz Arthur's eyes were now rivetted to the floor. "I merely surmised it, sir, from certain mysterious announcements of his visits to you; from your gracious openness to me upon the manner in which you spent every part of your income, except certain small sums at your banker's." (His father's countenance changed visibly.) "In God's name, do not think, dear sir, I presume to question your right to apply these how and where you will; nay, much, much larger ones. I am ready to acknowledge that the person we speak of has a right to expect, even to claim, due provision; but I am anxious your feelings should not be imposed upon, my other brothers not injured; your own too kindly heart——"

"Your *other* brothers!" repeated Sir Everard, in a tone of genuine astonishment. "Why what brothers have you besides Hylton and Thomas?"

Fitz Arthur looked up: "Is not the man we talk of, my brother?"

The hasty question could not be recalled; but his father's look had answered it whilst uttering; and overpowered with shame at the indignity his agitated spirits had offered that dear parent, Fitz Arthur bent his head again upon the honoured hand in silence.

"Oh, now I understand! now I see!" cried the good Baronet, laughing between tears and mirthfulness; then recovering himself with something like a sigh, he wrung his son's hand: "No, my boy! your old father was never such a reprobate as the fellow that made that boy's mother what she was when he was born; I loved the pretty girl too well, long before I saw your mother though. All the young fellows were in love with her. You must have heard Parson Meredith and me talk of the beautiful Bell Foster. He and I were not friends then—though the girl cared for neither of us, as it turned out; and my father would not hear of it.—Come, my boy, cheer up: don't look down

again, now you find you need not think a shame of your father!"

There was much in Sir Everard's speech to keep Fitz Arthur's eyes still down, though no longer from the pious fear of confusing him. An intolerable weight was at once taken from his heart; but he was overpowered by the sudden sensation of relief. His heart swelled; every thing in the room seemed to turn round with him, and he might have fallen, had not a burst of joyful tears relieved him. As his son started from his seat, Sir Everard opened his arms: their looks reflected each other. Fitz Arthur returned his father's strong pressure with one as strong, yet more agitated; then disengaging himself, hurried out of the apartment.

Will it be wondered at, that the first words he articulated were addressed in hasty ejaculation to his Father in heaven? "My God, I thank thee!" fervently repeated again and again, was all he was able to say for many minutes, while taking a few disordered turns up and down the passage. Other words were inadequate to express what was passing within him. He rejoiced that one so worthless as this Stephen appeared, was not connected with himself by blood; he rejoiced that his innocent brothers were not to be exposed to probable disgrace and suffering on this man's account: above all, he rejoiced that his father's conscience was not burthened with the guilt of seduction. He felt too, as if this moment had been the first in his life, to show him how much he loved that artless parent.

After short absence Fitz Arthur rejoined Sir Everard. The sunshine of happiness was upon his countenance; it warmed his father's heart. He drew a chair close beside him, and affectionately retaking his hand, said, "And who, dear sir, *was* the father of this man? who, from what you say, I still conclude to be a natural son. What are his claims upon us?—I trust I may now ask these questions without impertinence or irreverence."

The cheerful kindness of the son's voice reassured the Baronet. "Why, to my shame be it spoken," he replied, "the scapegrace has no claim upon me in the

whole world ; and yet I have been fool enough to let him get such a head of me somehow, that he has drawn 'my purse dry often ; when, on my soul, the money ought to have gone to have pushed you on in your profession."

"When you tell me who and what he is," said Fitz Arthur, "I feel pretty sure I shall not think so."

Sir Everard shook his head, but resumed :—"His father was my last lady's only brother ; as handsome and practised a libertine as any going. Poor Bell Foster was only a half-pay navy captain's daughter, with no money, nor much of a bringing up ; her mother being taken off when she was in arms. So a fine man of the world, with a red coat into the bargain, was like enough to persuade her that there was no use in asking his friends' consent. The short and the long is, she went off with him under promises he never fulfilled. She bore him this son, however ; and her father dying of a broken heart six months afterwards, she never held up her head again, (so my wife told me,) but followed him to the grave before her child was six months' old. I must tell you (to show you the poor girl was no hardened sinner) that from the hour she heard of her father's death, she refused to live with Major Elliot ; went and threw herself and child upon the charity of my tender-hearted Nannie ; then, God help her ! only a girl of sixteen."

"And could Lady Fitz Arthur at that time be of any essential service to her ?" asked Fitz Arthur.

"Indeed she was," answered Sir Everard. "She interceded with her father for her maintenance ; and he, seeing that poor Bell was a true penitent, was only too glad to put her out of his son's way. However, as I tell you, she lived but five or six months after Captain Foster's death ; leaving her child a sort of legacy to its young aunt. All would have done very well, had it not pleased God to remove old Mr. Elliot suddenly ; upon which, what could my Nannie do, but try to make the Major provide properly for his motherless babe ? She got him to do it ; that is, to send him to

school when he was old enough. And she, being too fond of this godless brother—dear soft soul that she was!—hushed up the matter; so that scarcely a creature knows here what became of Bell Foster, or whether she went away to her ruin or her uprise. My Nannie had promised the dying Magdalen that she would be a mother to her child; and I do believe that was the reason I found her a single woman at one and thirty, when she and I first met at Scarborough, above fifteen years ago. She would not consent to marry me, till I had given my consent to her going on with seeing young Stephen, and helping him now and then at a pinch."

"And this man's father, my dear sir, how did he act?" asked Fitz Arthur, almost foreseeing the sort of answer.

"Why, he had him home from school sometimes when he was himself at home, or had him to the places his regiment was quartered at; setting him no good example, you may be sure; and at last he got him a commission in some foot regiment, without giving him money to spend in the way he was used to whenever he was in his company. At last, Major Elliot was killed in a duel, leaving no will, nor a penny to Stephen, now nearly eighteen years of age; and after that the young man fell upon us."

"My dear second mother!" exclaimed Fitz Arthur, his eyes filling with tender and grateful recollection: "I fear she would think it her duty to continue all his fatal indulgences!"

"Ah, that she did, kind soul!" resumed the artless Baronet. "We consulted together; and as the boy was an officer, and had got expensive habits, and had been left so cruelly in the lurch by him that had taught him them, we agreed to make over to him at once, four thousand pounds; he promising to live upon the interest of that and his pay together. We did; but, Lord bless us! then came debts of honour, and other debts, and promotion. In short, the four thousand was run through; and then it was always begging and

writing, or coming to my poor easy-hearted wife, looking like his father, and talking like his father; (always respectful and grateful though,) many a woman's ornament did the dear soul deny herself, unknown to me, to get him out of troubles: so when it pleased Heaven to take her, I was forced to go on something after the same fashion. Then every time he applied to me, he vowed it should be the last; so that I did not care to say any thing of the matter to any one, for fear of disgracing him, and ripping up the old grievance of his father's bad behaviour. Besides, he always takes me unawares. However, I begin to be quite wearied out now; that is, I think he is growing too much for me to manage by himself: yet I am so afraid of younger blood taking fire!"

"If you fear that I should get into a quarrel with this man, my dear father," said Fitz Arthur, "dismiss the idea. I feel now, what I must ever feel on the subject; something much stronger, yet quieter than anger—indignation at the base ingratitude and cowardice of the profligate!" Fitz Arthur spoke with an energy and sternness unusual to him; hastening to quell the emotion which, in spite of his belief to the contrary, was fast kindling into wrath, as he thought of his credulous father's long harassment of spirit, in consequence of this reprobate's exactions; he added temperately, "Pray tell me, dear sir, what brought him here to-day."

"Why, to get more money, to be sure," replied Sir Everard, with a half groan. "Twelve months ago he sold out of the army, and embarked in some business, and now he is a bankrupt; has had a roguish partner, or an unfortunate speculation—I don't clearly understand which—but he came to beg a sum to fit him out for the West Indies, where he says he has a lucrative situation offered him; and that if once he and his wife were settled there, they would be sure of a good provision."

Fitz Arthur shook his head expressively. Sir Everard went on:—"I do assure you Delaval, I was high and hard with him this time; I told him roundly that I

did not believe one word he said, and that I should give him the money, because I never meant to give him any more while I had breath : for I had outrun myself so scandalously by such fooleries, that my sons were like to be beggars for it all the days of their lives , and that now you were come home, I was turning over a new leaf, and never meant to spend a penny after this without having your good will with it."

Fitz Arthur continued in serious thought for some moments after Sir Everard ceased speaking, then said, somewhat hastily, "I should like to see and talk with this man—I must do so."

"You, Delaval !" exclaimed his father : "by my word, that was what made me so shy of telling you the matter I knew you would run over all my folly in it, and be fortaking it up hotly with this poor never-do-good. — You men of the sword are forced to do so, they say. But is not one dear boy in the church yard enough for a father, Delaval ?"

"My dear father !" was all that Fitz Arthur could say in reply. The mention of his brother, from lips that rarely trusted themselves with Hedworth's name, went to his heart. He saw tears on Sir Everard's cheek, and he turned away his head ; accompanying the respectful movement with a pressure of the hand, expressive of tenderest sympathy.

When the father and son had recovered themselves, the latter explained his purposes so fully and temperately to the former, and so thoroughly convinced him, that instead of wishing to shame and irritate the person in question, he was desirous only of ascertaining his future means of subsistence, and ridding themselves of continued imposition ; that Sir Everard, entering more into detail of Stephen's proceedings, gave his son the satisfaction of being certain that he had clues to discover all his frauds, and grounds for threatening him with punishment, should he resist following any course his injured friends might counsel him to pursue. There was so much to blame, or rather to deplore, in the conduct of Stephen's patrons, that candour acknowledged the youth's extravagances and vices

might be fairly attributed to their weak indulgence; and as such, ought not to be severely dealt with in the man, though they must be resolutely. And for those injudicious patrons too, Fitz Arthur found excuses in the youth and inexperience and natural partiality of Elliot's sister; in his father's recollection of an early love, and indulgent fondness for his last wife. Both had acted to the best of their judgment; and if blame were to be awarded, it was not to be given to either of them.

Never does the awful denunciation, contained in the second commandment, appear so strictly fulfilled as in the case of illegitimate children! They come into the world without other inheritance than that of shame and dependence; they are claimed by none—owned by none; they want the first incentive to every generous affection, namely, a respectable and fostering home; they live without example of good; and those who gave them being, however their remorseful hearts may yearn after virtue, dare not enforce its practice by precept alone.

Illegitimate children, therefore, have neither family bond, family character, family comfort, to lay waste by their excesses; and untaught to dread offending our Father in heaven, what feeling is to restrain them from selfish gratifications? The very first institutions of society (those of the married state,) are armed against them; outlawing them from name and property. How then are the godless among these unfortunate persons, to help hating such institutions?

These, and other apologies of general application for the son of Major Elliot, and others due to the youth's particular circumstances, tempered, in the just mind of Captain Fitz Arthur, as it arose, that strong indignation which would otherwise have rendered it impossible for him to have met, with perfect self-command, the man who had taken such cowardly advantage of his father's best feelings.

He was softened also by the pleasure he felt on another score. Never had he beheld his father's amiable heart placed in a more favourable light. With the judg-

ment displayed, he would have nothing to do: the actuating motives were purely benevolent. There was less weakness and more goodness in the whole affair than Fitz Arthur had given his father credit for, in his first view; and that the concealment which had afflicted him, arose, not from guilty consciousness in Sir Everard, but from the dread of personal danger to his son, was a joy from which there was no drawback.

In the fulness of all these sacred and sweet emotions, Fitz Arthur discussed now his own future purposes. Sir Everard's eyes ran over, when he found that his son would voluntarily renounce the profession in which he had acquired a high reputation, and was still partial to, for the sake of brightening his remaining years.

"Then I am propped up for life!" he exclaimed. "God knows, I often feel that I am a child still, and not fit to be trusted to walk alone: any smoothed-tongued swindler can come over me. I wish it had pleased the Lord to have given me a little more sense among the rest of the good things he gave, and I have made away with, for want of it!"

"Dearest father!" said Fitz Arthur, fondly pressing the hand he took, with even more than his usual reverence, "you do not want *more* of any quality; you only require a little *less* of heart. Yet I do not think there is son or servant of yours that would barter the last for the first. So let us be content with our allotments, and simply stand to our guard, for the time to come."

"I should have told you all about this business long ago," resumed Sir Everard, "but the fellow was cunning enough to keep me up to the secret plan, by hints of his own hot temper, and your probable reproaches for what he had got out of me. And indeed he promised so faithfully never to trouble me again, after these last hundreds, that I was fain to believe you need never be vexed by knowing the fool I had been so long. To be sure he has got money enough out of me under divers pretences."

Fitz Arthur was aware that his father's great error

had been neglecting to see that his bounty was actually applied to the purpose for which it was said to be required. Had Sir Everard exerted himself more actively, and rather sought a respectable mode of earning his own maintenance for Stephen, than supplied his immediate wants on every occasion, the man might, at last have been established in something useful and gainful. As it was, it appeared too likely that, habituated to live upon begging, he was even now about to waste the money just obtained, instead of applying it to a permanent settlement for himself and his wife.

It was in this belief that Fitz Arthur felt called upon to take a personal share in so painful a business. He found the man had a wife ; they might have children : if so, compassion called for his interference, in addition to the duty he owed his own family ; and to preserve their future security, was a sacred obligation.

Whilst considering the character and conduct of the person in question, he was too candid to fail of perceiving that the root of all the mischief lay in Major Elliot's heedless choice of a profession for his son. Having deprived him, by his very birth, of all the rights and privileges, and reflected respectability of a gentleman, he ought not to have put him into a situation, where devoid of these, the youth must try to make another sort of consequence for himself ; namely, that of freer expenditure than better-born associates.

A parent in such circumstances, has no reasonable ground for expecting his son to be that prodigy of spontaneous excellence, which teaches how to seek distinction by nobler and worthier paths.

The just and generous nature which was now meditating over this mass of misery and criminality, felt the moderating influence of such reflections act upon his own feelings ; and he hoped that, by treating Stephen's past actions with merciful leniency, he might the easier induce him to wish and to will a different course hereafter.

Mr. Stephen's haunts were in London. Thither Fitz Arthur informed his father he should, with his leave, re-

pair immediately. The business of quitting the army would be quicker got through there than in Northumberland; and with part of the money he might receive for his commission, he inwardly determined, if need were, and the man's assurances justified it, to speed his settlement in some permanent way of providing for a family.

Neither love nor marriage were again mentioned by father or son. When the Captain's horse was announced (which he meant to ride to Hazeldean, that Abbot might have a conveyance back,) they parted. The heart of one sadly sure, that to think of either love or marriage in his case was desperate; since every guinea that came to him seemed so strangely to make wings for itself, the moment it reached his hand: the other's state of mind sweet and tranquil; he saw sunshine on the surface of his beloved Delaval, and he guessed not that

"The stream ran in coldness and darkness below."

CHAPTER VIII.

HONORIA first heard of Fitz Arthur's journey, at her second home, at Hazeldean, where she went to spend a long day with Mrs. Preston, whilst the Miss Prestons went somewhere else. She was busily making up one of her plain-dressing friend's lawn caps, when the latter took occasion to revert to the good-natured jests which had followed Captain Fitz Arthur's departure from her house a few days before. She did not herself spare Honoria upon the subject of her affected indifference to her favourite.

Our naughty heroine defended herself as well as she was able; yet maintaining her actual indifference to Fitz Arthur's preference, in spite of a certain exube-

rant pleasure, of which she really felt ashamed, and which might have told her she did not in truth set so lightly by his affection as she idly fancied. Mrs. Preston pressed the subject more seriously; vouching for the depth and sincerity of her favourite's sentiments.

Honorina did not choose to let the seriousness continue:—"Well, well!" she cried, laughing, though she blushed, "he won't die of it, you see, since he can go hither and thither, at will, without coming to say good bye, or with your leave; he's a mighty cavalier, careless sort of a lover,—if he be one, which I doubt. I tell you, Captain Fitz Arthur is not the sort of man to feel a profound, absorbing passion, such as one reads of, and wishes for. I am dying to inspire such a passion: for all my swains, hitherto, have been either so silly with their constancy, or so easily consoled by their strong sense, that I am determined to look out for a genius. Genius and great sensibility are inseparable: and I would as soon build my house beside a standing pool as marry a man without all the fine sensibilities. No, no, Captain Fitz Arthur is far too rational and self-commanded to suit me. Do you think I could ever make myself wretched about Captain Fitz Arthur? He is so straight forward and undisguised; so sure, too, never to do any thing wrong or foolish,—that it is quite hopeless to think of agitation on his account. Now don't you think that living all one's life with him would be like reading a good book? I should go to sleep over it?"

"Wicked girl! wicked girl!" repeated Mrs. Preston, smartly tapping her cheek. "I know you don't mean half this nonsense to be taken seriously. Nobody reads more good books than yourself, or would be half as angry to hear good books huffed. I believe you are using poor Delaval after the same fashion, flouting him with your saucy lips, and wrapping him up in your heart."

"Indeed, indeed, dear Mrs. Preston," replied Honorina, with instant earnestness, "if I know my own feelings, this is my opinion of Captain Fitz Arthur:—

his heart I think one of the best in the world,—his mind of the first order of merely rational minds, (for I doubt if he has much imagination,)—his principles, a rock,—his temper, as sweet as your own,—his fortune, far superior to what a portionless girl like me should pretend to,—his person, as God made it!”

“You little scornful, good-for-nothing”—interrupted Mrs. Preston, beating her again half in earnest;—for the shrugged-up shoulder and drawn-down lip of Honoria marked her estimate of Captain Fitz Arthur’s pretensions to manly beauty:—“Why, I vow to Heaven he is considered a very handsome man by every body but yourself. If you have any quarrel with his features, tell me where you will see such a countenance, or eyes with half the sense, and sweetness, and nobleness of his?”

“Well, I’ll grant you he *has* an amiable, benevolent face; certainly I would run to it for protection in a crowd,—if I saw no other!” Honoria laughed at her own bull, and her maternal friend resumed:—“I am glad you have the grace to own this. His figure, perhaps, you will have a fling at!”

“No, no, I leave his figure standing;” answered our heroine, her spirits rising; “abating a certain military swing and cadence of step; a sort of sway of the body and toss of the head, every now and then, as if balancing the long feather, I presume he wears in his hat when cap-à-pied in garrison; he is very tolerable in point of figure. I never should have found that out by myself, though; it was one of the Lady Lumleys’ admiration of him at his own ball, which I overheard, that made me take a good look at him; and then I saw that he was really *fait à peindre*, or *si hommasse*, as Bella would say.”

Mrs. Preston, protesting against the use of French words, smilingly noticed what had preceded them. “Well! I see no reason for my favourite to despair yet: if you were going to marry Captain Fitz Arthur to-morrow, you could not have said more to prove he was to your taste. Charming countenance! fine figure!

the best heart, sense, principle, and temper in the world ! I don't see what you could have said more !" and in the singleness of her own good heart, Mrs. Preston actually thought what she said.

Honoraria cut her benevolent pleasure short, by exclaiming,—“Oh, my dear Mrs. Preston, have I told you I think him perfect in manly grace and beauty, with the light of genius in every look ? Have I praised him for talents and accomplishments that make him the envy of one half of the world, and the admiration of the other ? Have I said a single word of his eloquence—charm—fire—sensibility—subduing sensibility ?”

“Mercy, my dear ! you would have me think you mad !” was Mrs. Preston's artless exclamation : “We read of such things as all-accomplished Lovelaces, that dress themselves up, too, into Adonises ; but your sterling good men are too busy with the work and worry of this hard-going world, to have time for learning to cut capers like a figure-dancer, or to play on as many instruments as the band of a regiment.”

“I know that, dearest Mrs. Preston,” cried Honoraria ; “and that is precisely the reason why I insist upon genius in the man I am to marry. Genius is inspiration,—intuition ! A man of universal genius has a talent for poetry, painting, and music born with him ; so he requires no *time* to learn these divine arts. Give me genius, and I care not if I must live in a desert island with the possessor of it.”

“Oh, my child, how little do you know yourself !” exclaimed the excellent Mrs. Preston : “you are too kind, too dear to many, to bear living only for one. I am mistaken if you could be happy without trying to make scores happy too. What power you would have if you were the mistress of Arthur's Court. Good Sir Everard doting on you so ! Poor Hylton so fond of you ! The dear Captain's heart so ready to outrun yours in every thing that is kind, and good, and gracious ! O, if I shall live to see that day !” Mrs. Preston's large benign eyes were floating in delightful

tears as she spoke, and her voice was full of motherly emotion.

Honorina was afraid of infection; and rallying her spirits, she said gayly,—“Now why will you try to talk me into falling violently in love with—being the mistress of Arthur's Court? For, to say truth, the old house is more exactly to my fancy than the heir himself.”

“Get you gone, foolish wronghead!” exclaimed Mrs. Preston, getting vexed for her favourite, and wishing to pique Honorina a very little: “I believe you are right to stop me: I ought not to wish you should like Captain Fitz Arthur; since I am rather led to think he is seriously endeavouring to prevent this affection from getting the better of him. If his father has really involved the estates, as people say he has, in truth it would be almost impossible for poor Delaval to marry without adding to the family troubles. However, this I will say for him, at any rate,—you may go all over the world, and never meet with such another heart.”

“Why, then, after my pilgrimage is over,” said Honorina lightly, “I'll come back and take it.”

“And do you fancy it will stay and wait for you, saucebox?” asked the still-rustic widow of Dr. Preston

“O, if a man's love cannot stand a few years' trial, it is sorry stuff indeed. What water-gruel happiness must follow the marrying such a person!”

“Get you gone, I say, for a provoking, high-flown girl, that you are!” cried Mrs. Preston, flinging back Honorina's arms from the neck she was going to encircle in girlish playfulness and security of being loved. Mrs. Preston's benevolent countenance was red with the only sort of anger she could ever feel; that which boils up and sinks with the blood colouring the cheek. She tried to turn away; but Honorina forced herself upon her breast, crying out,—“Only forgive my flippancy, dear, dear Mamina Preston, and I'll never jest again at your darling Delaval.”

The endearing tone, the silver sweetness of the voice itself, the fond caress which accompanied them, and

the very youthful face looking up in that of Mrs. Preston's, were not to be resisted. She pressed Honoria to her breast, repeating, "There, there! you are my own good child again."

Ere she could resume the subject, which she now hoped to treat with better success and more seriousness, Mrs. Preston's plain-liveried servant opened the door, announcing with the same breath, "Mrs. and Miss Matilda Shafto," and "Colonel Mason."

The latter was a well-drilled elderly soldier, commanding an infantry regiment quartered in the county.

Every thing about Colonel Mason was as thoroughly disciplined as himself. His belt, boots, queue, curls, had a more regimental air than those of any other officer. His black stock kept his head more stiffly in the air; his doe-skin gloves held his fingers more firmly separate: he strode up to his best friend as if he were advancing to meet an enemy; but, as he made the advance with that old-fashioned politesse which we are told caused one of our great commanders to take off his hat on the field, and apologize to his adversary for his future proceedings, the manner was rather gallant than alarming. The Colonel being known to have risen by merit alone, and to live upon his pay, was suffered to go at large through the county, without springes being set for him, or fear of his decoying any of its fair inhabitants to his quarters.

Colonel Mason was most felicitously plain and agreeable, and of such a determined age, that young ladies netted him purses, made him gorget-roses, invited him to sit by them, engaged him on their side in all their little causes, and openly quarrelled about his attractions before his face, with the most perfect security. He was the ally of the young men, and the escort of their fair sisters; he kept fathers and mothers in good humour by playing at cards, or listening to stories; he brought gossip for maiden aunts, and sugar-plums for little children; promoted parties; patronized strolling actors; lent his regimental band to help on a ball or a breakfast; managed to get persons asked where they had not previously

visited ; contrived accidental meetings between admirers and their admired ; in short, did all manner of good-natured things, without ostentation ; and made every one his friend without meanness.

Colonel Mason was neither a young man, nor a rich man, nor a clever man, nor an amusing man, nor a marrying man,—he was simply a cheerful man, of an obliging disposition, and, as such, he was a popular man.

As the Colonel did not belong to Mrs. Shafto, he kept politely in the rear, till that lady had gone through her usual evolutions of smile, curtsy, and caress, and was fairly seated : he then advanced boldly into the middle of Mrs. Preston's sunny parlour, bowing his neatly-powdered head, and showing a set of teeth that would have been called fine in a handsome mouth.

"Madam," he said, "I am here to give you the earliest intelligence against myself, that you may make dispositions accordingly. Some of my youngsters having nothing better to do, and finding the races are not to be this year, are going to run their horses on the Cuthbert Fell a fortnight hence ; by way of excuse, I believe, for giving you ladies a collation and a dance afterwards ; and they want to occupy your meadow, there, with their temporary dancing-room. I have told the foolish lads that they have just hit upon a scheme to lose both their money and their hearts on the same day ; but they will hear nothing against their fancy. So may I petition for the loan of your field, and the pleasure of your, and the Miss Prestons' company on this great occasion ?"

Mrs. Preston lost not a moment in granting one of the requests. Mrs. Shafto courteously complimented the Colonel upon the gallantry of his officers ; then inquired who were expected at their entertainment.

Nature having kindly enabled Colonel Mason to make the most of his white teeth, he now smiled again from end to end of his bronzed visage, while he replied, "Mrs. and the Miss Shaftos,—we hope ; and the rest of our hospitable friends in the county. Miss O'Hara," he continued, turning to our heroine, "I have not the

honour of knowing Mrs. Meredith, but I hope you will condescend to grace—”

Mrs. Preston, seeing Honoria's colour heighten, as it always did when her aunt was alluded to before Mrs. Shafto, hastened to answer for her: “I will take care to secure you Miss O'Hara's countenance;—her friends of St. Cuthbert's, or at Arthur's Court, will be too glad to bring her to your gala;—so you may spare me and my daughters. We shall be at Harrowgate then, I am sorry to say, and must positively go away a week before your races, as we regularly meet a sister of Dr. Preston's there, and cannot make any excuse.”

Colonel Mason expressed sincere concern for the loss, and sincere pleasure for the grace announced by this sentence. Honoria, in compliance with his repeated entreaty, allowed him to expect her, either in the suite of Mrs. Fothergill, or in company with the Miss Mulcasters.

Mrs. Shafto, by way of hiding her own spleen, and raising that of the girl she had grown to hate, began to enumerate, with affected concern, the names of many agreeable men who would loose the pleasure of these new races by absence from the country. Among them she included Captain Fitz Arthur and Major Stanhope.

“Madam, I beg your pardon,” said the polite Colonel,—“we have indeed to regret Captain Fitz Arthur's absence, but Major Stanhope will be here; he has let the party he came down with go back without him, and has got a fresh leave. I do not presume to guess *what* bright eyes detain him from his duty:” the Colonel glanced significantly at Honoria, whose effects upon Major Stanhope he had noticed when in its fullest force at Arthur's Court.

“The Major is very guarded, then,” observed Mrs. Shafto, glancing in her turn at her daughter's raw-paste face, which could not colour up on a signal, but which went very respectably through certain movements meant to indicate modest consciousness. “He never affords one an opportunity of guessing at his fair de-

tainer,—for he seldom talks of any of our pretty neighbours, when he is so good as to lounge away a morning at Shafto Place. It is really vastly good of Major Stanhope to ride seven or eight miles to visit us. We are so very stupid just now,—nothing going on,—not a creature with us ! Indeed, Major Stanhope is the best bred young man of my acquaintance.”

The complaisant Colonel could only bow and smile in civil acquiescence, as the merits of the lady's acquaintance were best known to herself. He was even so considerate as not to set her right in her evident mistake about the number of Major Stanhope's visits,—the mistake being in favour of the young officer's gallantry, if not of his taste.

Mrs. Shafto continued,—“Major Stanhope *did* talk of driving over some Sunday to go to church with us, to see the old monuments, and the curious tower,—but somehow he did not come. Had he ever heard Mr. Meredith preach, I am sure he would not have continued to think there was no temptation there.” Mrs. Shafto's half-condescending, half-insulting bow to our heroine, was neither unmarked nor unfelt;—yet its meaning could not wound one indifferent to the Major. Startled by her coolness, into the apprehension of a perfect understanding between the two objects of her present manœuvre, Mrs. Shafto added, with the tone of a question, “I do not think the Major is personally acquainted with our worthy rector?”

Honorina had no right to suppose the question intended for her ; and she kept silent. Mrs. Preston was obliged to satisfy her guest's curiosity, by herself putting the direct question to her young friend. Honorina calmly replied,—“Major Stanhope does not visit at my uncle's ;”—and by the composure with which she avowed what Mrs. Shafto thought must be a mortifying fact, excited another set of uneasy feelings in that lady. Miss O'Hara, she concluded, must have designs upon Captain Fitz Arthur. She was determined to frustrate them.

Mrs. Shafto had shrewdness to perceive, and adroit-

ness enough to gather from her intercourse with Mrs. Meredith, that pride had a great share in the composition of the Irish orphan: nothing was so likely to succeed, therefore, as piquing that pride. She suddenly changed the subject, by asking the Colonel if he had heard that Captain Fitz Arthur was going to quit the army? adding, the report must delight all the young ladies who had designs upon his hand; laying a marked emphasis on the last word.

"His heart, I think you must mean," observed Mrs. Preston, with benevolent reproof.

"Pardon me, my dear madam," resumed Mrs. Shafto, who never failed to mark the original disparity between their ranks, by assuming an air of studied condescension; "I believe if the rich hand is obtained now-a-days, the heart may be dispensed with. I mean where young women are without fortune, and unhappily taken out of their proper sphere to mix with persons above their condition. Such girls contract tastes and habits which they can only continue to indulge by securing a good establishment; they naturally, therefore,——"

Mrs. Preston interrupted the cruel venom of this speech, by remarking, "That she thanked Heaven she was unacquainted with any young women to whom this description could be applied; so she supposed Captain Fitz Arthur was not in great danger, since his fair enemies must be too distant to carry on their measures very effectively!"

Honoria, against whom all Mrs. Shafto's spleen was directed, would not have discovered its exact meaning, but for her zealous friend's quicker perception. Seeing Mrs. Preston's colour rise, hers rose too; for now she caught the intended affront: and, while turning the full light of her eyes upon the offender, she gave her in one look the whole weight of her indignation.

Honoria had no mean faults,—all hers were of greater magnitude: she laughed at the Miss Shaftos' supercilious glances on her simple dress, and her *patten'd and umbrella'd* walk to church on wet Sundays;

but she would not brook the insult of being almost taxed with designs upon a man, merely because he was richer than herself. Pride was roused by such suspicion—delicacy wounded ;—at the moment, it must be confessed, she wished, with her whole heart, that Captain Fitz Arthur might offer her his hand, that she might have the haughty satisfaction of knowing she had refused him.

Mrs. Shafto's malice had fully succeeded : it had stifled justice, generosity, tenderness for others ;—it had completely given the victory to self, in a young breast, hitherto filled solely by kind affections ; it had made Honoria, for the time, unworthy of the love she was anxious to have avowed, only that she might reject it. Such is the direful power of one human being over another ! The evil purposer finds his instruments—frailties and passions—within the bosom of his victim : if he knows to wield them skilfully, his success is sure ;—at least over those who have not yet learned to “watch and pray unceasingly.”

Mrs. Shafto, satisfied of triumph, merely smiled her unsatisfactory reply to Mrs. Preston's simple defence of her covertly-attacked young friend ; while Colonel Mason, not at all in the secret of this little skirmish, renewed the subject of Captain Fitz Arthur's intention to quit the army ; expressing great doubts of the report being true ; and lamenting it, if it were so, with all the energy of military eloquence and ardour.

In Colonel Mason's eyes there was no profession worthy of a man except that of arms ; nobody was, in his opinion, fit to live, that was not eager to die. Having neither father nor mother, brothers nor sisters, wife nor children, houses nor land, nor other dependents than his soldiers ; nor live stock except his horse ; he could not understand the possibility of balancing any number of inferior duties against the paramount one of obeying his king and serving his country. He, therefore, after having duly descanted upon the duties and honour of a soldier, decidedly refused crediting the

report of Captain Fitz Arthur's desertion from that dignified character; and, most unluckily, turning to Honoria and Miss Matilda Shafto, who had hitherto performed the parts of mutes, inquired what the young ladies thought upon the subject.

"O, I am of Mamma's opinion of course," answered Miss Matilda; forgetting that the two last words were *an aside*. Honoria's feelings were yet in rebellion; and thinking of poor Fitz Arthur only as Mrs. Shafto's relation, she said hastily,—“I believe it is considered wrong in a man to quit the army while he is young, and his country at war—so I am really sorry to find Captain Fitz Arthur is going to do so.”

Whether Miss O'Hara did or did not care as little for Captain Fitz Arthur as the indifference with which she spoke implied, was nothing to Mrs. Shafto; it was enough for the latter lady that Honoria was piqued into an open censure of her lover's conduct, and avowed her credence of the report. She coolly resumed: “A bit of news I heard yesterday may perhaps have had something to do with this matter. That odd Mrs. Letitia Bronspeth of Aylecliffe Castle died last month at Bath, and has left all her property to that Miss Clavering, who was the Beauty at Arthur's Court on Sir Everard's birth-day.”

“And we are to understand from this—?” questioned Colonel Mason, inclining the ram-rod perpendicular of his belted body towards the speaker, with serious attention.

“Positively nothing further, upon my authority, my good sir,” exclaimed Mrs. Shafto, “than that Captain Fitz Arthur was Miss Clavering's father's aid-de-camp in India; that she was then a fascinating girl of sixteen, too young for any thing more serious than losing her own heart, perhaps, and winning another person's unconsciously, and that she is now a charming young woman, nearly twenty-one, her own mistress, with enormous estates, not a hundred miles from Arthur's Court.”

“Well! if these are the Captain's views, I wish him

success!" said the Colonel, stiffly resuming his perpendicular; "but I had rather that the gallant fellow, who distinguished himself so finely at the Pass of Tappore, and the battle of the Black Rocks, preferred the honour of the British arms, to a wife and a castle."

"My dear sir!" cried Mrs. Shafto, imploringly, "you must not quote *me* as speaking *officially* on this subject. I *can't* speak positively, for I won't know anything. I merely put two and two together, like other folks. I confess I wish the thing, because we all know how sadly Sir Everard has hampered himself by his excessive liberality and carelessness. I know Captain Fitz Arthur's high notions of duty will lead him to look for fortune in a wife, that he may repair the family property; he has such fine principles, that I am sure he would never think of consulting inclination in such an important concern as marriage."

Honorina actually stared at this extraordinary commendation: but as it was purely a stare of astonishment, Mrs. Shafto went calmly on detailing *her* notions of duty and virtue;—notions so worldly, so heartless, so entirely the result of a life devoted to appearances, and of feelings callous to every natural enjoyment, that even Mrs. Preston's indulgent nature could no longer afford her a silent hearing; and by frequently breaking in upon the picture, she succeeded finally in driving her away.

Colonel Mason remained awhile to talk over the projected races: he was induced to stay to dinner; other visitants dropt in towards the evening; so that Honorina escaped the renewal of a subject she was but ill-inclined to converse upon, the passion and merits of Captain Fitz Arthur, and returned home more indignant at Mrs. Shafto, and more disdainful of becoming connected with her through Fitz Arthur's means than she had ever before been conscious of.

CHAPTER IX.

CAPTAIN FITZ ARTHUR'S absence was prolonged nearly four weeks : during that period much had occurred in the little world of Edenfell.

A most decided friendship had taken place between our heroine and Miss Jane Mulcaster ; it had proceeded to such lengths, that the former, after spending several days at St. Cuthberts, was invited to come again, and spend weeks, before the dean went thence, to keep what was called his *residence* in the cathedral city, to which his deanery belonged.

The friendship, however, was yet, principally on the side of Jane : that is, she was the person to tell all the little secrets ; to ask advice ; claim sympathy ; and haunt the privacy of the other. Honoria's character was on too great a scale to have petty secrets to communicate, so she confided nothing : but Jane's affectionate, generous spirit, grew so fast upon her liking, that she was never wearied by her visitations.

Jane was now in love and in difficulties ; her swain was in the army ; and papa always wished his daughters to marry clergymen, since his only son declined going into the church :—therefore, she was afraid of giving Major Stanhope leave to propose for her,—yet, *he was so very much attached to her, and she did care a little for him.* Her first confessions did not exceed this moderate description of regard :—then, *she cared a great deal* ; at length, she came to own, that *she felt she should never care for any body else.*

"Major Stanhope," exclaims a fair reader, "why he is in love with the heroine !" I beg leave to answer *he was* ; or rather, he was struck a little, not penetrated : he was checked on the threshold of a sudden fancy, by that mixture of *mauvaise honte*, and that delicate aversion to coarse-mannered connexions, which had enabled Mrs. Shafto to succeed, while drawing his at-

tention to Miss O'Hara's ill-bred aunt, and boldly taxing him with his admiration of the young lady herself.

Jane Mulcaster having witnessed Mrs. Shafto's manœuvres at the ball, and heard her malicious remarks since then, was determined to render these stratagems abortive, by winning the lover back for the portionless and deserving orphan. Major Stanhope was slightly known to her brother, and her brother was as eager to spite Mrs. Shafto, as she was to elevate her new friend ; so a greater degree of intimacy was easily brought about.

Fortune favoured the scheme, it appeared ; for the ——— Hunt was in their immediate neighbourhood, by which means the Major was what she termed easily *come-at-able*. For the honour of my own sex it must be averred, that never were intentions purer, or zeal more disinterested, than Jane Mulcaster's, when she began to put them into action. Major Stanhope was asked to St. Cuthberts, and he came ; came frequently : the innocent girl flew at him with honest warmth for Miss O'Hara's sake ; she talked to him of Miss O'Hara —she invited Miss O'Hara to St. Cuthberts : never was benevolence purer !

But as it often happens, a young lady talks to a man of another young lady till she makes him in love with herself : and sometimes she talks away her own heart meanwhile.

So it happened in the present instance. Stanhope had natural good sense, and sounder notions than most men have at his age, of what qualities in a woman are likely to render the happiness of the married state permanent : he had the blessing of a valuable mother, and from her he learnt to estimate the female character : his heart was impressible ; his impressions from beauty vivid ; he first admired, and then loved Jane Mulcaster.

Her generous zeal in the cause of Honor O'Hara was too ill-disguised by her artless attempts at careless commendation, not to glare in his eyes. At first he laughed at it to himself, and turned it aside ; then listened for the sake of hearing what it was that Jane

Mulcaster thought most worthy of praise. By such means he acquired a light by which to examine her character in turn. It stood the test of such examination; and if she soon appeared to him the loveliest and brightest ornament of public assemblies, she became yet lovelier to his sight in the dear sanctuary of home. So beloved as she was there by all its roof sheltered, and so admired by all who frequented it, he could not allow himself to marvel at her being always in good-humour: but to behold the petted child, the yielding sister, and to see her continually refusing, with generous nobleness, to take advantage of her father's partiality, was something so rare and magnanimous, that he believed no other corner of the globe contained such a heart, in such a beautiful form.

Perhaps the influence of general family amiableness is not sufficiently understood, surely as it is felt: the harmony, happiness, and elegancies of Jane Mulcaster's home speedily became, in her lover's idea, parts of herself; and the blooming ardent-mannered girl was little aware how much she owed of her charm, to the pious and pleasant father.

There is a great deal of reflected lustre in every agreeable family: even on the score of person, as well as character. For many a merely nice-looking girl has all the honours of beauty awarded her, from being grouped with three or four sisters decidedly pretty. Nothing could be more favourable to the growth of a particular inclination for one of its members, than a frequent view of the family circle at St. Cuthberts.

So many young, and blooming, and happy faces!—so much affection, and good humour, and good spirits!—and the certainty of so much real goodness existing in every heart there! The family vein too, was very agreeable; not strong enough to be called humour, nor ever fine enough for wit: it just amounted to pleasantry.

This pleasantry was found upon examination, to consist of indifferent materials: such as quaint phraseology, ridiculous modes of displaying resemblances between

things and persons ; acute remarks upon character and conduct concealed under an amusing affectation of praise or blame : but such slight materials, adroitly assisted by a happy variety of looks and tones, and gestures, often produced very comic effects.

In William Mulcaster, the ore of the family vein ran the richest, or at least lay nearest the surface; and as he never wanted or waited for applause, while passing on from one gay nonsense to another, that very carelessness gave peculiar zest to his sallies.

Major Stanhope being always too timid to attempt giving a lively impulse in society, though formed to enjoy and advance such an impulse when given by others, was exactly the person to be captivated by this family character ; and in his eyes, therefore, every one of Jane Mulcaster's relations had a positive charm.

He saw, also, nothing but what was right and respectable in what Mrs. Shafto had deprecated in his hearing, the Dean's kindly habit of receiving with hospitable welcome, all the poorer clergy of the diocese, and all the emigrants scattered by the French Revolution over Northumberland, in common with other counties.

Though brought constantly to the house by her brother, and obviously sought by Jane, not a particle of flattered vanity had any thing to do with the sudden yet sincere attachment Major Stanhope conceived for her. Conscious that her original purpose was to revive his wish of knowing Miss O'Hara better, he was too diffident of his own merit to suspect that she was beginning to wish he might continue that strange indifference about the pretty Honoria's expected visit at St. Cuthberts, which had so lately provoked her.

At that time, however, Jane's heart was unknown to herself ; and when he actually excused himself under some frivolous pretence from meeting Miss O'Hara, the first day she dined there, her instant accusation of his having transferred his admiration to one of "the horrid Misses Shafto, with their arms like fishing rods," extorted his secret. Ere Honoria arrived, the blushing, pal-

pitating Jane had got volumes of tenderesses and transports, hopes and fears, prospects and plans, to make the confidence of to her friend.

An easy-tempered elder sister's rule over sisters only a few years younger than herself, could not be supposed a very strict one: in truth, the three junior Misses Mulcaster followed their own harmless humours pretty frequently, without let or molestation. Jane, therefore, was left to manage her own love-affair after her own fashion; that is, no one except her brother either saw or taxed her with having a love affair in hand.

To Honoria she voluntarily confided it, as Major Stanhope had honourably done to William Mulcaster. Scarcely eighteen, Honoria was not the best counsellor in the world for one of the same age; since she knew as little of the world by experience, as she who sought her counsel: but her natural judgment was sounder; and if she could not teach prudence, she was sure not to inculcate deceit.

It was clear even to her shallow knowledge of such subjects, that Major Stanhope would be considered to have begun at the wrong end; and that he should not have attempted carrying the young lady, before he had secured the old gentleman. But every fault of love brings its excuse with it, to a young heart. She knew that Stanhope was surprised into the declaration, therefore worthy of pardon.

It was soon settled by this small junta, that without attempting the slightest concealment of the sentiment which principally actuated him, the Major was to go on improving the Dean's evident prepossession in his favour, by a continuance of those unaffected attentions, and that respectful deference, which are so pleasing from youth to age. If the worthy dignitary appeared still better pleased with his son's military friend, then the question might be asked; if he did not, the fair Jane would give it all up, and live and die single!

The Major of course took his oath of celibacy upon the same terms, with equal fervour and complacency.

The step preparatory to these arrangements was that

of asking the consent of Major Stanhope's family. This, the lover vehemently insisted, would prove a mere form : for his father was the best father in the world, (saving only the Dean of ———,) and he left him a free agent on all important occasions ; and Miss Mulcaster's birth, connexions, and fortune, were unexceptionable—her individual self beyond valuation—how then could there be a doubt of consent ? However, the form of such a consent was one of those credentials necessary to produce, when the lover should sue for his mistress's hand ; and William Mulcaster would not allow of a single drive in Stanhope's tandem, (upon which poor Jane had set her girlish heart, for the mere sake of being frightened in his company, and assured by his presence,) until this momentous document should arrive. It was written for, therefore, most eagerly ; and was actually upon the road, travelling in the same mail with Captain Fitz Arthur, when he returned to his home.

This promising attachment was one of the events that had taken place during Fitz Arthur's absence : one more important, since it produced a vital effect upon his own happiness, occurred within a fortnight after his departure.

The natural graces of Honor O'Hara, her orphan state, her slender provision, her uncle's respected character,—nay, the very coarseness of Mrs. Meredith, and the squalid disorderliness of the house so sweet a creature was doomed to inhabit, were reasons of the good-hearted, to bring her forward, and show her kindness ; but with Mrs. Shafto, and a few envious misses, and snare-setting mothers, they were reasons for the exact contrary ; and, aided by such auxiliaries, Mrs. Shafto proceeded in the laudable resolution of putting Miss O'Hara down.

Since this pretender had been "*taken up* by the Dean of ———'s very popular family, and carried about by Mrs. Preston, (who, though she was *canaille*, had got the *entrée* any where,) there was no saying where her impertinences and usurpations would end !" It was now known, for the laird had told it himself, without

charge of secrecy, that Honoria had *refused Frazer of Dunraven ?* This circumstance, demonstrating her freedom from mercenary motives, had set easy-hearted parents at rest about their sons. Mrs. Shafto shrewdly believed it might render the girl more formidable to some sort of young men ; and that the hearts, which no trick could catch, might voluntarily surrender themselves to undesigning loveliness.

Mrs. Shafto's notion of those she deemed her inferiors, was something like that of the ladies belonging to the ancient Pairie of France. She thought nothings so easy as the disposal of an inferior's hand in marriage : at least she thought nothing ought to be so easy to a *great lady*. Quite satisfied, that if Mr. Frazer *had* offered his hand to Miss O'Hara, he had made the proposal, and received the refusal, without her uncle's knowledge, she deemed it almost impossible for Mr. Meredith to decline obliging the girl to marry, if a fit suitor appeared, and applied first to him :—the thing would be *quite* impossible, if that suitor's proposal were previously recommended by a person of consequence ; condescending, at the time, to express themselves as a friend.

Resolving to make Sir Everard Fitz Arthur this person, and to work under-ground herself, by getting Mrs. Meredith for an unconscious ally, Mrs. Shafto made a visit to Arthur's Court. Her reasons for wishing so to dispose of our heroine must be obvious.

Mrs. Shafto, on the present occasion, prepared the ground for herself, by *making the agreeable* in every way, and upon every subject, to the simple-hearted baronet. He was used to speak of her as a good kind of fantastic woman enough, that would be all the better, if she would not ape the real finely-bred lady at Ravenshaw ; meaning the Dowager Countess of Wearmouth. He now received her with the cordiality of old-fashioned relationship. Mrs. Shafto praised the late arrangements at Arthur's Court, repeating all that the neighbours *did* say, and more that they did *not* say, in eulogium of Captain Fitz Arthur. According to her account, even

fools and villains understood and lauded his "sober-suited" excellence. Good Sir Everard was yet but in his horn-book in the science of mankind; so believing it quite natural for knaves to love the virtue which disclaimed, and the penetration which unmasked them, he lent delighted and thankful attention to her flattery.

His heart was thoroughly warmed by her, when advancing to one of the deep massy windows of the front, Mrs. Shafto looked out upon the diminished park, as if to admire the successive sunshine and shadow of an April sky chequering the distant meadow and corn lands. Perched on the top of a hill, covered with meagre plantations of infant trees, a new white house, with a fancy colonnade of thin, painted pilasters, caught her eye, and she complacently exclaimed, "Really Chaplin gets on prodigiously! We will not inquire how our agents contrive these things, that is Mr. Shafto's and Sir Thomas Sykes's affair; but now he may certainly be considered one of the under gentry. I lament that he has not more sense than to let his eldest son intrude into my Lord _____'s hunt. To be sure the young man is properly respectful; and whenever one meets him upon his fine hunter, draws up to the roadside, and waits with his hat off, till we have passed."

"A foolish, good-for-nothing puppy for all that!" observed Sir Everard. "Abbot tells me we should be amazed if we could hear him among his own companions: talking of us all by our Surnames or Christian names, as if he were hail-fellow-well-met, with the whole county. It is Charley Raby, and Will Mulcaster, and the pretty Lumley girls—meaning the Ladies Lumley, I'd have you to know:—and Jane Mulcaster—and Honor O'Hara. I dare say I am the old fool at Arthur's Court, and you the would-be-fine-lady of Shafto Place." "I dare say we are," quietly answered Mrs. Shafto, her heart gangrening the while: "but surely, Sir Everard, one of the young women you have mentioned is quite in his line. Miss O'Hara is just the sort of person our agent's son might pretend to as a wife."

"The deuce she is!"

"Certainly. She has the misfortune of belonging to low people, as well as he ; and if his uncle is a dry-salter or an oil-man in London—I'm sure I don't know which, but I suppose they are both alike,—her aunt's father was a colliery captain, and her uncle a petty farmer, and her aunt a poor sempstress, I believe, in a garret at Burton's, the grocer's."

"Upon my life, my good lady, somebody has been stuffing you with a pack of lies," interrupted Sir Everard, with more warmth than decorum. "Miss O'Hara, to my knowledge, has no uncle that is a farmer, nor aunt a needle-woman. The Merediths are an old Yorkshire family, of substance and station, of which our worthy rector is the younger son of a younger son,—so cannot have much of their money. Mr. Meredith has only one brother alive, and he is chief judge at Madras, or Bombay, or somewhere in India ; and I never heard of any aunt of Miss O'Hara's except the old lady in Ireland, that left her what she has, and lived there in the very handsomest way for a single woman."

"My dear sir, you quite mistook me. I was glancing at Mrs. Meredith's pedigree. I do not say Mrs. Meredith's relations are Miss O'Hara's relations, but you will allow they are connexions ; and I tell you fairly my sole reason for not noticing Miss O'Hara, was the extreme awkwardness of doing so, without taking her vulgar aunt into our visiting book ; to have carried the Misses Shafto where they might have met the sons of their father's servant, (which a land steward may be called,) as parts of the company, was quite impossible. You must allow that as prejudices, nay propriety, go, no considerate mother could wish such a thing."

"No, certainly,—no," hesitated the candid Baronet, "that would be an awkwardness. The young Chaplins must manage a settlement in another county, if they hope to turn their money and education to account, and get into good society ; and as folks say Chaplin has given one of them, at least, a college touch, I don't see why they might not."

"Neither do I," returned his wily visiter ; "Chaplin

talks of putting the eldest into the church, and buying him a living somewhere. Now, if he did this, and young Chaplin married Miss O'Hara, that sweet girl would be comfortably provided for, surely quite suitably; for what more honourable calling than that of the church! She would then be taken out of the way of being injured by many idle reports now circulating, of her doing this, and saying that, to take in the thoughtless heirs of the county. It would only be kind and charitable in you, Sir Everard, to speak to Mr. Meredith on this subject. I know that a little encouragement from our worthy pastor is all that is necessary to make Chaplin propose one of his sons. I really wish to bring about a creditable marriage for this pretty young woman; since she has now got the character of being very forward and presuming, and being ready to run down all the gentlemen's throats. It is vastly cruel and unfeeling, and all that, in the young men:—I say, she is only carried away by too much spirits, and I have said every thing I could to Chaplin to do away his first demur at her want of fortune. I have puffed her blood-relations a good deal."

"You are very kind, really very kind!" exclaimed the Baronet, "poor dear! So they call that pretty playfulness, and innocent openness of hers, forwardness! and they say she wants to take in the heirs of us old squires! I can answer for it she don't want to take in my son! and I hope he is as well worth looking after, as most in the county; for since he came from India, she has come once of her own accord to Arthur's Court, for ten times that she used to do before he came. Mrs. Fothergill and I were always so fond of having her to amuse poor Hylton. Now, she never comes to pass a whole day except when we are by ourselves, which, now I mind me, is when Delaval is from home."

"O, the idle report goes," returned Mrs. Shafto, carelessly, "that Captain Fitz Arthur is not to her taste; he is too grave, and too cold, though she owns he is dying for her; and he is, above all, too frugal. This is the sort of idle impertinence, my dear sir, which

other silly girls, who call themselves Miss O'Hara's confidants, make for her. They really ought not to repeat such little thoughtless sallies."

Sir Everard's face was, by this time, like a flambeau ; for the moment, during which this blasphemy against his beloved son was uttered, he felt the mere repetition of it nearly as great an insult as the first conception, and he was ready to break forth into angry remonstrance with Mrs. Shafto herself ; but recollecting their relationship, and remembering many a testimony of Honoria's respect for him and his son, he exclaimed, "Pshaw ! stuff, indeed, my good madam ! I don't believe one word of it, though you do ; but I'll go to the bottom of the story ; I'll see who dare say Delaval Fitz Arthur is dying for a woman that don't care for him."

Mrs. Shafto, believing she had now stirred up the Baronet's blood to a proper pitch, refrained from uttering more than insinuations against the hated Miss O'Hara. No stimulus she thought could now be wanting to make him try to get this dangerous girl out of his son's way, and at the same time lower her presumption, by urging Mr. Meredith to encourage a proposal from one of the younger Messrs. Chaplin. Mrs. Shafto's card now was to affect charitable feelings.

"I need not pray you, my dear sir," she said, "to be tender of the poor ill-taught girl's situation in society. If she has said any thing in the levity of youth, and the surprise of being so suddenly set up, which could amount to a pertness on the subject of Captain Fitz Arthur, surely it would be inflicting useless pain upon worthy Mr. Meredith to name it to him : that could do no good, and as for the poor young woman herself, one would spare her, in consideration of her very neglected education, and the very ill-judged notice that has been taken of her of late. It will be much better to let her down quietly, without any stir about this country gossip of what she says. Getting her a good husband in her own way of life, will be the very noblest revenge possible."

Mrs. Shafto stopped smiling. Sir Everard sat as if

quite lost in thought; then gravely rising, after a silence of some duration, said emphatically, "Leave the matter to me, madam. Depend upon it, if it turns out as I begin to suspect it will, I'll follow your advice, and make it my business to help the young lady to a good husband."

Garrick himself, had he been extant then, could not have made a better exit. As if an author had prepared it for him, the butler entered to remind his master of an engagement with a man of business; and Sir Everard courteously bowing to his kinswoman, quitted the room without being obliged to enter into further explanation. Mrs. Shafto was under the necessity of ordering up her carriage.

The Baronet's head was not even as moderately clear as usual, whilst talking with this man of the law: it was in fact, full of much nearer and dearer concerns. He was thinking with a melting heart, of his own affections in early life,—of all that his beloved son had been suffering, and sacrificing for him and his younger children; of that mixed delicacy and proper pride which, operating in the breast of one so poor and high-principled as the niece of their rector, might well account for her apparent avoidance of his coveted heir: he was thinking too of his own pecuniary affairs, and torturing his brain to discover some mode of making a generous and grateful act, practicable to himself.

Every-day business and the attorney dismissed, Sir Everard betook himself to such a task, of seriously considering probabilities and improbabilities, fit and-unfit ways and means, as had never held him so long before, under any circumstance of his own life. Hitherto, he had been too apt to act from momentary impulse; but the happiness of his darling son was said to be at stake, and no effort of heart or head seemed now above the powers of a grateful and obliged father.

He first pondered over every past occurrence, which could throw a light upon the supposed passion of his son for Miss O'Hara, and upon the nature of her sentiments towards him. The more he reflected, the more

he became convinced that his son was deeply attached to the charming Honoria, and that her alleged imperfections on the subject, were but parts of that system of concealment in affairs of the heart, which is recommended to all women, and which is demanded by propriety, while the gentleman's affection is unacknowledged. Although she certainly did frequent Arthur's Court much less than formerly, the lively pleasure she always showed there, proved that inclination had no share in keeping her away : here then was generous, disinterested liking discoverable. Sir Everard, in the true spirit of his romantic race, longed to recompense it by the best gift in his possession.

In the course of an hour he had completely made up his mind as to what he ought to think and what he ought to do. He then sat down to his writing-desk, and taking a fair sheet of thick gilt-edged paper and a new crow-quill, wrote in rather an indifferent Italian hand, the following letter :—

*To His Grace the Duke of * *.*

My dear Lord Duke,

I have taken the liberty to change my mind since Your Grace's last proposal, for the four Raphaels ; so, if Your Grace have still a fancy for having them, they are at Your Grace's command, for the same money my uncle gave for them abroad forty years ago.

I have the honour to remain,

My dear Lord Duke,

Your Grace's very faithful friend,
and very humble servant,

EVERARD FITZ ARTHUR.

This epistle sealed with the Fitz Arthur Arms, of many quarterings, was despatched by a man and horse to * *, on the instant, while Sir Everard ordered his dinner to be served in the small eating-room ; the pictures destined for transportation being in the larger one.

An hour afterwards, he sat down in this small room

not to eat, but to look on the table; not to see there, plates and dishes curiously arranged after the best approved marshalling of the most noted cookery-book; but to behold in the glass of memory the graceful person of his first wife, as seeing those pictures for the first time, when he brought her a bride to Arthur's Court, she stood admiring and praising them. His bride's praises had sanctified these pictures to him, who never till then had cast upon his godfather's noble legacy a single glance of triumph in their possession.

Since that hour he had ever beheld them with a feeling which the most perfect connoisseur could not have understood; though they might have mistaken it for an admiration purely bestowed upon four of the finest specimens of Raphael's angelic pencil. Sir Everard now thought of his letter despatched to His Grace of **, as he would have contemplated the signing of a forced bill of divorce from his young and lovely partner, had she been then living, and that in the first month of their union.

But to clear one estate for Delaval, and so repair part of the injury which his own prodigal good-nature had done that excellent son, was an aim which redeemed the apparent impiety of thus parting from what he had so long identified in his thoughts with the memory of a beloved first wife.

Much, however, as Sir Everard coveted money at this juncture, much as he needed it, he could not bring the honourable pride of a gentleman and the honesty of a man, to what he called the degrading act of huckstering his pictures. "I transfer them (he afterwards said to His Grace of **,) I don't traffic them away. I should never be able to look Your Grace in the face as gentleman ought to do gentleman, if I made one penny by their transfer beyond their original cost to my uncle." Such were the notions of an old-fashioned baronet, in old-fashioned times!

After this day's transactions, Sir Everard neither spoke to Mr. Meredith of young Chaplin, nor to Honoria of his disdained Delaval; he kept close in

Arthur's Court, seeing to the careful taking down and packing up of the regretted pictures, ordering the redemption of his Cumberland estate with the money thus raised, and getting writings ready which were to transfer it, during his life, solely to the use of his eldest son. Never did Sir Everard conduct any matter so orderly and with such privacy.

Meanwhile the party of long-expected rank and fashion, arrived at Ravenshaw. Expectation was, as usual, disappointed: it comprised only the dowager countess, and her married son, without his distinguished wife; and two middle-aged, plain men, *sans* titles.

What a party for races, and a *déjeûné* ! What a blank in Mrs. Shafto's lottery for her daughters ! However, upon inquiry, matters turned out better than they seemed,—a discovery we often make after our first vexation of disappointment has evaporated. The two plain men were both single men ; they were in *The House* ; they held great places under government ;—in short, they were worth looking after.

Mrs. Shafto heard that Lady Wearmouth was seriously indisposed, the very morning after her return to a home, once crowded by young and blooming faces, now covered with the ashes of the grave. Lady Wearmouth had lost several children, and the last had fallen on the field of war. She could not be expected to revisit the residence where she had borne and nursed these children, without yielding for a while, at least, to subduing recollections.

Mrs. Shafto took the cue of sensibility from the gossip of her female attendant, who had it from Lady Wearmouth's own woman ; and most particular inquiries after Lady Wearmouth's health and spirits were therefore made by Mrs. Shafto in person, at the very door of Ravenshaw.

Honorina, who had just been released from a week's confinement to her uncle's sick room, (Mr. Meredith having had a feverish cold,) heard with youthful delight of the *great family's* arrival : as Mr. William Mulcaster constantly assured her his friend Mr. Peter Gubbins

would certainly accompany or join them, and that if he did, she would as certainly see him at St. Cuthberts.

While confined to her uncle's chamber, Honoria had been reading nothing but her Knight of the Shamrock's poems, and thinking of him every spare moment with restless curiosity. She had actually registered in her memory the young poet's polished forehead, and sculpture-like eye-bone: (connoisseurs know what vast sense and beauty are to be found in that important projection :) she had the tone of his voice still ringing in her ear; she remembered that it had startled her with its melancholy music: and, in consequence of these remembrances, she gave herself up to the visions of uncurbed imagination. Mr. Gubbins was not long of rivalling in her fancy, both the marble image, and the fabled powers of the Grecian Apollo.

She had just got by heart one of Mr. Gubbin's best odes, an address of Leonidas to his soldiers, when she heard that Captain Fitz Arthur was returning to Arthur's Court, that he had sold out of the army, and was going to stupefy as a country gentleman. To her, whose prejudices were in favour of every brilliant career in life, whose studies had taught her to admire fame won at the cannon's mouth, and who besides loved the name of soldier because her father had borne it; to her, this news was a source of bitter disappointment and regret.

To think that Captain Fitz Arthur, whom she was beginning to like so very much, should at such a period as the present prefer inglorious security to enterprise and honourable danger! to think he could endure the odium of deserting the ranks of his country, when she was actually at war with one enemy, and about to grapple with another! to sit down in an easy chair, and look on!—poor Fitz Arthur sunk fathoms in her opinion. "She was so vexed,—she could not say how vexed she was,—it was quite absurd to be so vexed! She thought, therefore, how impossible it would be for her to marry any one whom she could not look up to with sentiments of adoration; since she could be made so very uncomfortable by the falling off of a mere

friend, what would be her anguish to discover imperfection in a husband?"

Honorina was in truth too much pained by Captain Fitz Arthur's supposed delinquency to mention her feeling to any one; she felt ashamed at being so concerned about a person who had evidently one very pitiful point in his character. It was apparent, she thought, that Captain Fitz Arthur was not a brave man, though he had done his duty as an officer when actually in the field; and if she communicated this opinion to a third person, she would be pledging herself to despise and disregard him, and of that she found herself perversely incapable.

When will that dark curtain rise which is to show by its rising, the performance of all that have performed, and do perform, in this awful drama of life? When shall we know who have been the truly great, the good, the wise of our earth? When shall we learn to demonstration, that actions are nothing separated from noble motives; that the most splendid deeds of valour—the sublimest treatises upon virtue—are but show and sound, unless the aim of the one be to benefit mankind, the inspiration of the other, a soul earnestly striving to be the thing it admires!

Could Honorina have known how Captain Fitz Arthur had been employed while she was leaning half-enamoured over vain verses about love, glory, and patriotism, she would have retracted her unjust sentence with contrite tears. She would have seen him quenching a soldier's honourable ambition from a sense of duty to his parent, and tenderness for his brothers; she would have seen him exercising the greatest degree of moral courage, whilst persisting in one determined line of conduct with a man well skilled to sneer, or insult, or entreat, a feebler nature out of its best purpose, as he saw occasion; and dealing gently with a wretch incapable of one compunctious feeling, from that generous movement in his own breast, which made him incredulous of complete depravity in another's.

After infinite trouble, Fitz Arthur had found Mr. Stephen in London, living with a mistress, not a wife ; not undertaking the management of a mercantile speculation destined for America, but connected with a set of gamblers by profession ; and about to launch the last money obtained from Sir Everard, in the disgraceful establishment of a gaming house.

It was no easy task for Fitz Arthur, in his conversation with a man whom the dignity of virtue forbade him to conciliate, to preserve himself from receiving such affronts as must have called forth a chastisement, which to give, would be to dishonour himself ; yet which, under such circumstances, three-fourths of the world would have loudly called for. Rather than have gone into the presence of a vile person, whom he must coolly tax with baseness, falsehood, and extortion, he would have faced a whole army of such cannon, as Honoria did him the grace of thinking him glad to escape from ; so repugnant was it to the nature of Delaval Fitz Arthur, to overwhelm a fellow creature with a sense of their own vileness.

Happily the cowardice of guilt at first awed Mr. Stephen : on Captain Fitz Arthur's entrance he expected to have a severe reckoning demanded of him by the plundered heir of Sir Everard, and to hear of prosecution and imprisonment, for certain acts of fraudulent extortion. But when he found that no inquisition was to be made into the past, that his generous examiner gave him credit for some remnant of honest inclination, he was ashamed to dishonour such noble trust ; and immediately entering into confused details of former misfortunes, and lamentations of error, and unlucky attachments, afforded Fitz Arthur ample room for pressing on him the only plan with which he was likely to feel any satisfaction. This was to accept a commission in a regiment raising in Germany, for the protection of Hanover, where Fitz Arthur's interest insured him advancement, provided his public and private conduct should be found to merit such favour. But one of the first conditions stipulated

was, that he should part from the abandoned woman to whom he had lent his name, and to supply whose extravagance, Fitz Arthur, upon his own testimony, believed most of his disgraceful acts were performed.

Many were the difficulties which the worthless spendthrift threw in the way of this plan: but no alternative was offered him between its acceptance and a total banishment from every member of the Fitz Arthur family. He saw that Sir Everard would henceforth be guarded by the vigilant resolution of his eldest son, therefore be for ever placed out of his reach; and from his hand alone could he now expect any pecuniary succour. After much doubling and turning, he was at last obliged to give up all thought of escape, and to submit quietly.

Not many days after this, an ensigncy in the newly raised corps was given to him by its German colonel, to whom Fitz Arthur had previously and frankly stated, in confidence, the man's history. As Stephen had shown some talent and activity as an officer when first in the army, it was hoped that military ardour might again kindle in him; and to keep him from pecuniary embarrassments, Fitz Arthur pledged himself to supply the new officer with a hundred pounds annually: (while his behaviour merited it,) confident, that with such an addition to his pay in such a country, he might enjoy many comforts which other subalterns could not command.

Having actually seen Mr. Stephen off, and settled some business of Mrs. Letitia Branspeth's will, with a heart lightened of one heavy load, and his name stripped of its agreeable addition, a military title, Fitz Arthur turned his face homewards. If he went on his way with some bitter regrets springing from the lingering love of a profession in which he had distinguished himself, and been conscious of blessedly interposing between brute violence and its victims, these were soothed by the prospect of gladdening the last years of his bereaved father; of cherishing the unfolding perfections

of his brother Hylton's character ; and of conquering the rebellious nature of Thomas.

It must be owned, too, that Fitz Arthur was now and then entranced by certain visions, in which the image of Honor O'Hara was the first bright shape. Her heart, though not his, was not yet won by another : it might be won by him at last, perhaps ; and in time his father's affairs would come round ; and Honoria's wishes, like his own, had so little of the garish world in them, that with her, competence would be sufficient :—at any rate, he was now going to live always near her.

Fitz Arthur would not look further into the future : success in one virtuous endeavour to free himself from a sorrow, inspired him with hope on a dearer subject ; and “ he went, therefore, on his way rejoicing.”

CHAPTER X.

ONLY three days previous to the one on which De-laval Fitz Arthur commenced his journey northwards, a most important event occurred to the family at the rectory. It befell them on their washing day,—a day hateful to all lovers of peace and pure air, who have the misfortune to dwell where good housewifery is exercised on a narrow principle of economy.

The house was in its meridian of dirt and disorder ;—a sudden hail shower was falling ;—maids, footboy, mistress, were in the act of twitching half-dried linen off the lines of the desert garden ; (the crazy gate of which, was swinging to and fro, maugre Hetty Ma-cready's repeated cry of “ Bad luck to that gate ! ”) pegs were giving way in all directions, sheets and shirts trailing in the mire with the fall ; when two gentlemen were seen advancing up the avenue of towels and table-cloths that led in two regular lines from the fore-court gate to the mansion itself. As they cau-

tiously made their way through an undergrowth of inferior Napery (modestly clothing the naked gooseberry bushes,) Honoria got up from her seat to shut an open window, that she might hear her uncle's voice as he read aloud, while she darned his black stockings, unmixed with the jarring tones of Hetty and Mrs. Meredith. She saw the unseasonable visitors, and immediately knew one of them to be Mr. Mulcaster: the other, then, with head poetically inclined, must be his friend Mr. Gubbins.

What a day for her first sight of the poet? What a death blow to romance and impressions!—As if she had indeed received her death blow, Honoria fell back in the seat whence she had carelessly arisen. Her cheeks and lips were like ashes. She was not able to answer her uncle's question of "What was the matter?" Scarcely was she able to rise according to common form, when the study door flew open; and William Mulcaster, with a face of scarlet, said, in a hurried way, though giving personal precedence to his companion,—“Mr. Meredith, I have taken the liberty to let myself in.—I could get nobody to hear.—I must announce, therefore, the Earl of Wearmouth.”

At that name, so honoured in the British Cabinet, and so awful on the continent of Europe, Honoria looked up: she certainly did not see her champion of the Shamrock (though an absurd fancy as certainly had lightened through her mind as Mr. Mulcaster spoke,) but, *bonâ fide*, Lord Wearmouth, serious, stately, yet unalarming, replying with the utmost simplicity to the worthy Rector's embarrassed and repeated apologies for the servant not being in the way to announce His Lordship.

The business of Lord Wearmouth's visit was soon told. He came with a note from his mother to Miss O'Hara: he presumed the young lady present was Miss O'Hara, and he presented the note.

Honoria, fearing there was some mistake, hesitated to open the note, till His Lordship explained. The explanation was as flattering as unexpected. Lady

Wearmouth had just received letters from her second son on the Indian station, informing her of a dangerous and tedious illness, which had attacked him in the Presidency of * *, where Mr. Meredith's brother was chief judge: it had occurred while Captain Barrington was actually transacting some business with that gentleman at his bungalow, in the interior, and had confined him there above two months.

During this long period, Captain Barrington was nursed with such care, kindness, and liberality, by persons till then perfect strangers to him, that he was anxious to find out some stronger mode of testifying his gratitude, than the ordinary one of a piece of plate, or an expensive article of jewellery. Having discovered that his hospitable entertainer had a brother and niece living close to Ravenshaw, nay, remembering the former well, as their respected pastor, he wrote to beg his mother would make an opportunity of personally showing Miss O'Hara every attention in her power; while he afforded his brother, the Earl, a mean of obliging the elder Mr. Meredith essentially.

Captain Barrington well knew what so simple a request to his mother was likely to produce in due time, if the young lady were found worthy of distinction. Her ladyship now wrote to apologize for not being able to call upon Mr. Meredith and Miss O'Hara in consequence of indisposition, and to beg (as she might venture such a freedom with a young lady,) that Miss O'Hara would do her the favour of dining at Ravenshaw on the following day. A carriage, it was said, would be sent to bring her to dinner, and would convey her back at night.

Lord Wearmouth, observing Honoria's heightened colour, as she repeated from the Countess's note the substance of this flattering invitation, considerably observed, "We shall have no party,—only two friends in the house, and Mr. Mulcaster. So soon after your indisposition, my dear sir," he added, turning to Mr. Meredith, "it would be wrong to think of tempting you out; and Mrs. Meredith, of course, my mother must first call upon."

As her uncle bowed assent to both these remarks, Honoria saw herself left to the appalling necessity of going alone to Ravenshaw, to dine with a person she had never seen!—a Countess-dowager too!—How was she to conduct herself, so little as she knew of modes and manners out of Edensfell and Ballygarry! She fancied herself scared by long pauses in conversation at a solemn dinner, and longer intervals between the courses! How was she to know whether it would not be impertinence in her to attempt breaking such pauses? though to endure their trying awfulness, seemed a superhuman attainment. Her quick fancy conjured up all these horrors in a moment; but recollecting that she would have her old acquaintance, Mr. Mulcaster, to fall back upon for support, she hastened to express in her prettiest manner, how much she considered herself honoured by Lady Wearmouth's notice; how very happy she was that a relation of hers had been so fortunate as to render a service to one of Lord Wearmouth's family; to beg His Lordship's pardon while she wrote a few lines to the dowager Countess; and, in short, to say and do all that was worthy the pupil of one, who had once mixed with the best society in Dublin.

Lord Wearmouth's visit was so short, that Honoria could only learn, in a whisper from Mr. Mulcaster, that his friend Gubbins would positively come for the races; and Mrs. Meredith had not time to strip off one gown and put on another that she might come in a proper figure, ere the gentlemen departed.

Mr. Mulcaster's whisper had fortified our heroine against her aunt's ill-humour; who no sooner heard the details of the visit than she was transported out of herself with passion. Had she been invited to Ravenshaw, gladly would she have exchanged that distinction for an evening's tea and scandal with Mrs. Burton and Mrs. Chaplin; but to have Honor O'Hara asked there without her, not to be able to tell those village worthies that she might have gone had she chosen, but did not choose—this was an affront which flesh and blood

could not brook. She raved in her wrath, refusing to believe that Lady Wearmouth was indisposed ; and alternately railing at her husband for sitting tamely by to see his lady so slighted ; and at Mr. John Meredith for being great and respected abroad.

Mrs. Meredith in her sane state, with meritorious instinct or calculation, shunned and disliked her superiors ; she knew no other wish connected with those of exalted stations than getting something out of them ; but in her present mood of jealous self-love, she attacked poor Honoria as though the latter had robbed her. Mr. Meredith's resigned countenance was the best lesson to his niece, and she resumed her stocking-darning with a submissive meekness which ably copied his fashion of slowly turning over the leaves of a folio Bible.

Mrs. Meredith exhausted herself at last, and recollecting a best gown of many flounces, probably left in the garden, she abruptly quitted her husband's study, and so gave Honoria an opportunity of inquiring more particularly than she had ever before done, into the family character and family history of the residents at Ravenshaw.

All Mr. Meredith had to tell was interesting and prepossessing. The last Lord Wearmouth had been as much distinguished for fine taste and the graces, as the present one was known to be for the loftier powers of mind, and the sterner virtues of a patriot statesman. During the late lord's lifetime, Ravenshaw had been an earthly paradise of domestic bliss : its mistress was as captivating as excellent ; and surrounded by eight lovely children had known no intermission of happiness, until an early death bereaved her of her husband. To his memory she wedded herself, though without the ostentation of declaring it ; silently retreating from the attentions of many a candidate for her favour as a young and charming widow, and decidedly refusing such as had the rashness to avow their wishes in the front of obvious discouragement.

In the course of fifteen years after her lord's death,

Lady Wearmouth successively lost five children ; three died of infantine disorders while yet only blossoms ; the fourth was a sweet girl just opening into womanhood ; the fifth was the fine youth who fell in the disastrous expedition to Holland in 1794.

There now remained to this devoted mother but the present earl, an only surviving daughter married to a nobleman of high character ; and a brave young sailor on the Indian station, just raised to the rank of post-captain.

In speaking largely and warmly of this distinguished family, Mr. Meredith owned that his own ill-assorted marriage had made him backward in replying to their cordial advances : hence he was not a frequent visiter at Ravenshaw, while they principally resided there ; and as none of them had come to it since Mr. Charles Barrington's death, he felt that he had their acquaintance to recommence. But he assured his niece that she would find such natural sweetness and simplicity of character, combined with higher qualities, in Lady Wearmouth, that so far from being uncomfortable in her presence, she would wish to live in it always ; and would wonder how such graciousness and goodness could be supposed to form the original, whence Mrs. Shafto copied her alternate nauseous condescension, and cold contempt.

To Ravenshaw, on the following day, Honoria was conveyed in one of the Wearmouth carriages. Though her uncle had so fluently detailed the solid worth, and attractive graces of the dowager Countess, she yet went with unreasonable apprehension, grounded upon the prejudiced idea that no one could be so admired by Mrs. Shafto as to become her model, unless they were elegantly odious. She forgot that Mrs. Shafto imitated what other people admired.

X. How quickly was this prejudiced notion changed at Ravenshaw ! She was received by Lady Wearmouth alone, dressed like a woman of rank, yet neither ostentatiously nor negligently. The first tones of a voice naturally sweet and winning, the first regard of

an eye which more than one sorrow had softened into dove-like gentleness, dispersed Honoria's prejudices. She returned the Countess's amiable welcome, by a blush and a beam from her brighter eye, which rendered the indistinctness of her fluttered words of no consequence.

The Countess gracefully entered at once upon the motives which prompted her to seek so earnestly the acquaintance of Miss O'Hara, and to hope for greater intimacy with their worthy rector. She spoke with evident, yet restrained tenderness of her absent son's dangerous illness, of his many excellencies, his filial devotion to her, his country's expectations from him, and her own maternal feelings in consequence. She touched for a moment upon her last loss, as if only to give occasion for dwelling longer upon her obligations to those who, under Heaven, had preserved to her this other beloved child.

Honoria's brief answers, and far more expressive looks, evidently pleased Lady Wearmouth; for after having read her the letter from Captain Barrington, which detailed his obligations to Mr. John Meredith, and included some interesting particulars of that gentleman's infant family, she proceeded to narrate little anecdotes of her sailor's childhood, which showed how fondly a mother's heart treasures up what to others might seem trifles, but which the after life of the man proves to have been faithful heralds of future character: thence she digressed into partial accounts of her other children; showing herself nobly regardless of ordinary forms and customs, when only laudable feelings could be excited by throwing them aside.

Honoria, contrasting all this with Mrs. Shafto's notion of maternal fondness, and high breeding, almost smiled at the gross blunder thus committed.

Lady Wearmouth's egotism, as she herself called it somewhat unjustly, had a motive under it, which however Honoria did not discover at the time; but which after observation of that gracious character made her fully aware of—it was the desire of inducing her young

visitor by this apparent confidence, to speak a little of herself, and her own concerns.

Lady Wearmouth sincerely wished to be of real service to the niece of Mr. John Meredith; and to do that, she knew that she must find out, without offensively questioning her as if by virtue of superior rank, what were the wants in her present situation, and what her own habits and inclinations.

It was not what is called *the art* of unlocking characters, which in three quarters of an hour before dinner gave Lady Wearmouth a pretty clear view of Honor O'Hara's peculiarities of education and condition; it was the irresistible effect of genuine kindness, operating upon a young and ingenuous heart. Those three quarters of an hour were invaluable to Honoria, for they set her completely at her ease, upon one or two important points; and substituted the delightful hope of pleasing an admirable person, for the fear of sinning against the punctilious creed of a woman of excessive, nay frivolous refinement.

The dinner to which the ladies were summoned at six o'clock, (a very late hour at that period.) was perhaps like a cabinet dinner—but certainly not in the least like one at the Mansion House; yet it was sufficiently and elegantly furnished.

Lady Wearmouth denounced neither the wines, nor the made dishes at table, though she never ate of the latter; and smilingly pitied herself for being condemned by a hectic tendency to drink only water. She invited her guests to the indulgence of their individual tastes, by taking it for granted that nothing could appear at a good table, which it was indecorous to eat or to drink and once making that opinion quite evident she suffered things to go their course without notice.

The party consisted only of Lord Wearmouth, a Mr. Herbert, a Mr. Pemberton, the Countess and our heroine. Mr. Mulcaster had sent an excuse. The gentlemen were all members of administration; and those who could guess at such secrets, divined their

reasons for seeking the distant retirement of Ravenshaw, just before a great political interest was about to be agitated by the privy council.

Lord Wearmouth looked what he was, an able statesman: there was no anxiety, but deep and provident thoughtfulness in his aspect; it declared him one conscious of high responsibilities, and of capacities to meet them—one that fixing his eye upon a single great and right point, would go straight up to it, regardless alike of party clamour, or of private weakness. Lord Wearmouth was habitually taciturn; but his grave look expanded into one of sudden amiableness whenever the name of his wife and boys were mentioned.

Mr. Herbert sat, and said nothing; looked gruff, and ate laboriously.

Mr. Pemberton talked fluently, and foolishly. Honoria thought: but he looked so acute, that she suspected what was true, his thorough contempt for the intellects of women. Though turned of fifty, Mr. Pemberton addressed himself to her with an air of obvious gallantry; yet his remarks never exceeded in pretence to consequence any thing beyond a fashion or a song, a yeomanry corps or an expected drawing-room: he did not, therefore, gain much upon her attention.

During dinner the rattle of four wheels and four horses, the ringing of gate bells and house bells, and a perfect rush of servants into the hall, announced some arrival.

Lady Wearmouth was surprised. She knew it could not be Lord Francis Fitz James, as he was to be that very day celebrating his father's birthday in London. Could it be her son Horace? His letter had hinted at the chance of his bringing home some official person from India. "A mother's fancies are foolish I know!" she added, after hastily expressing this idea, as she met the smiling dissent of her eldest son's eye,—and reseating herself, she waited quietly, though with a raised complexion, for information from without.

Honoria's silly heart had throbbed at the name of Lord Francis Fitz James, associated as it was with

that of his friend the knight of the shamrock, and the lyre; but it beat with more honouring emotion when thus called to sympathize with an affectionate mother. The entrance and message of a servant quickly ended all heart-throbs.

The message came from Lady Haverford, a young widow, the niece of Lady Wearmouth. "She was on her way to Scotland, when hearing of her aunt and cousin being at Ravenshaw, she had come, self-invited, to go to the officers' races with them. Lady Haverford had dined on the road, therefore would change her dress, and meet her aunt in the drawing-room."

Lady Wearmouth welcomed this message with a smothered sigh, and a gracious smile; and soon after the dessert appeared, preceded Honoria to the place of rendezvous.

A remarkably pretty woman, dressed with an air of graceful negligence, started up from a cushion on which she was sitting, fondling an Italian greyhound, and throwing back a profusion of curling, though cropt hair, flung her arms around the neck of Lady Wearmouth, exclaiming, "Dearest aunty! sweetest aunty! my beauteous aunty!" kissing her really handsome aunt between each energetic exclamation. "I know I have behaved like ten dozen of monsters to you,—but it is so impossible to write letters when one is living with loads of people!—and I've had all the affairs of the dear Stafford girls upon my hands; Caroline's match is off, and Lizzy's will never come on. I have worked like a galley slave for them, but all to no purpose.—Then I have had the subscription ball for that foolish Madame Grenier to manage, people tore me to pieces for tickets! and I have been plaguing the very heart of the Horse Guards out, for a commission for Mrs. Norton's son or nephew; and getting people to go to somebody's benefit at Drury Lane: I forget the man's name, but he vowed he was in deep distress. In short, I am fairly worn out; and am come here before I get into the whirl of Scotland, and its dear, delightful people.

to forget all the world except my dearest aunty, and my dear awful cousin Wearmouth."

Lady Wearmouth kept smiling while this rapid address was uttering : when it was done, she said tenderly, " Ever going the same round, my dear Gertrude, squandering your best powers and valuable time upon every one bold enough to ask for them at first sight ;— leaving us who love you, and others whom you might essentially benefit, to sigh in vain after your sweet society and active kindness." She then presented Miss O'Hara, introducing her as the niece of the Mr. Meredith, to whom her cousin Horace owed so much gratitude.

Lady Haverford's exclamation at this unexpected rencontre was rapturous ; she insisted upon embracing Honoria, telling her aunt with graceful good humour, that she *would* be enchanted with a niece of that darling Mr. Meredith, even though at the risk of being lectured for hasty feelings. She then said so much of her cousin Horace, and the obligation conferred on his whole family by the attention paid him during his illness, that Honoria secretly settled the youthful widow, as one attached to the gallant sailor by a tenderer tie than blood relationship. Although there certainly was something artificial in Lady Haverford's complexion, her countenance was captivating ; her eyes were either fine, or finely taught, for they had the greatest variety of expression even while trifles were speaking ; and the caressing gaiety of her manner was what Honoria had never before seen.

None, save a woman of high rank, can indulge in such a manner, which has all the unrestraint of childhood ; yet, from a woman of high rank, it ever takes us by an agreeable surprise. Again, Honoria could not forbear thinking how egregiously Mrs. Shafto was mistaken in supposing insipidity and insolence the marks of a superior station. Lady Haverford was all frankness and familiarity.

The moment Lady Haverford discovered by questioning her, that Honoria loved music and every object of taste, she sang and played to her numberless original

airs gathered from persons of musical genius, instead of repeating those popular opera songs, which we so often hear till even their beauty becomes loathsome. She sketched with a pencil little illustrations of her own vivid descriptions of persons and places abroad; retailed the amusing gossip of all the fashionable houses she had been staying at; made her aunt laugh in spite of overcharged ridicule in her descriptions; and occasionally broke in upon her own spirits, by little pathetic parentheses, about the untoward loves of different female friends.

Every thing she said, displayed a heart of luxuriant, unpruned good-nature; a disposition not merely disinclined to look on the bad parts of human character, but ready to shut its own eyes, when to see would be to disturb its happy unconsciousness of a defect. Honoria was quite captivated.

As Lady Wearmouth rang for coffee at the appearance of the gentlemen, she looked smilingly at her niece, who was flying back to Honoria's side, after an animated meeting with her ministerial cousin, "I see," she said, "it is quite in vain, Gertrude, to dispute your possession of Miss O'Hara for this evening at least, so I shall have less scruple in making up my son's whist party. Miss O'Hara, I give you over to my niece—but I warn you to be upon your guard; she is—at least so my Horace says—mightily given to pick people's pockets of their hearts:—and she is so careless of her many pieces of plunder afterward, much as she values them—that I won't say what becomes of them at last."

"You dear, scandalous person!" exclaimed Lady Haverford, with invincible good-humour. "Well, if Miss O'Hara is not afraid of me after this, she and I will waft ourselves into the conservatory. Good bye, sweet aunty! darling aunty!"—kissing her own pretty hand with a little affectation, yet so engagingly, that Honoria did not see it was somewhat tinctured with the intention of being engaging. To the conservatory they went, through the open glass-doors which led into it.

The ascending stages of this agreeable appendage to
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a ground-floor sitting-room, were crowded with beautifully arranged plants, breathing warmth and fragrance ; it looked out upon a glade of the park, where a herd of deer were seen lying in the moonlight, under the shade of some venerable oaks ; glimpses of the river Eden were caught through openings of more distant masses of wood, gliding like melted silver in the same sweet moonshine. Honoria's picturesque-loving eye, involuntarily fixed upon the scene out of doors.

Lady Haverford, meanwhile, was gayly and unsparingly stripping the choice exotics of their brightest flowers, to make a nosegay for her unobservant companion, till its enormous size made her laugh at herself ; and praying Honoria to take at least half the flowers out of her hand, or she should drop them all, she noticed the direction of her eye.

"Don't I know what you would like at this moment ?" she asked, with flattering quickness. "Come —if you are not afraid of the evening air such an almost summer night, I am not ; shall we venture ?—there !—there !—now you are cold proof." And as she spoke, Lady Haverford took a silk scarf from her own shoulders, and twisting it round the head and throat of Honoria, declared she looked like a head of Domenichino's : then hurried her into the park.

It was in vain that Honoria, quite fascinated by this attention, and the manner of doing it, besought her to think of herself : Lady Haverford declared she made a practice of inuring herself to every possible fancy of every creature on earth ; so she never took cold, and never was over-heated, and never tired, and never hungry, or thirsty, or sleepy, except when it was quite convenient to other people. How was it possible not to be captivated by such an unselfed character, extravagant though it might be !

As they advanced on their calm path, Lady Haverford often stopped to look round and admire. "What a night !—what a divine moon !—those still trees !—those fine shadows !—that lovely little river !—how beyond comparison was the enjoyment of such a

scene, and with such a companion, before all the fuss of dressing and playing the pleasant to a set of people we care nothing for!"

Lady Haverford's observations met with the heartiest concurrence from Honoria; and having thus established their congeniality on these minor points, her charming ladyship proceeded to go deeper into her companion's heart, by enlarging on the characters and histories of her aunt and cousin. In doing this, she had yet greater means of fascinating her hearer:—for the details of Lady Wearmouth's domestic losses; anecdotes of the son and daughter, torn from life in its earliest spring; descriptions of the present Earl's simple and amiable mode of living in the bosom of his family when breathing after the arduous duties of his high office; animated portraits of Captain Barrington and of his sister, Lady Sarum, at once the most enchanting of fine ladies, and the fondest of wives;—all these circumstances called forth Lady Haverford's warmest powers of description. If the persons described might not merit such rapturous praise as she bestowed, in its fullest extent, at least it proved the most loving and loveable nature in their eulogist; and Honoria could not prevent her own enthusiasm from bursting from her lips with the remark.

Lady Haverford was gratified to absolute rapture. All at once she exclaimed, "That crystal moon!—O for Lord Francis Fitz James!—is he not quite worthy of being with us just now?"

Honoria confessed her non-acquaintance with a person of whom she had heard only incidentally. Lady Haverford was all amazement.

"Not know Lord Francis Fitz James! was that possible! the only creature positively *the fashion!* the very spoilt child of every living thing!—he, that was never to be got to go any where, or to do anything he did not choose;—therefore, the most delightfully provoking creature possible!—the person always going his own way! caring neither for coaxing nor flattering!—he that was like nothing on earth but a

Grecian statue! he that spoke poetry!—breathed music!—knew more of history and science than all the professors at the two Universities!—the most wayward—most careless—most impassioned—most listless—most romantic—most fashioned—most winning—most disdainful—in short, the most contradictory, yet all-conquering being ever created.”

Lady Haverford was quite out of breath with her own rapid thoughts, as well as utterance. Honoria's pulses were beating tumultuously:—this description was so like Mr. Mulcaster's account of his friend Mr. Gubbins—and there was obviously some mystery about that gentleman's visit to Arthur's Court; she remembered the sculptured brow of her champion; and, with a fluttering voice, she endeavoured to say how much she wished to see so extraordinary a mixture of faults and graces.

The animated widow went on to say that her friend Caroline Stafford had been dying for him all the season before the present, and what she had suffered!—but he had never given her the slightest hope!—he was so strangely cold to most young ladies!—yet now and then he seemed suddenly struck with a new face, and would devote himself to it for a whole evening:—then something would disenchant him, for he was fastidious to a misery—and he would become as sad, or scornful, or indifferent as before.

“Then vanity, at least, is not among the sins of your paragon!” Honoria, half-questioned, almost ashamed of the interest she felt. Lady Haverford entirely acquitted her hero of it. She maintained, however, that he was too romantic, that he expected more than he would ever find; and she prophesied, that if ever he married, it would be some one quite out of his own set; for he made no secret of his aversion to what he called the world, though he amused himself with it:—and, as he scorned money, he would most likely be bringing some lovely creature out of a cottage, or some interesting savage from North America.

Honoria ventured to suggest, that in neither of these

personages could a man of refined taste expect to find the companion he sought.

Lady Haverford owned she was right,—excusing her silly assertion, by the fact, “that his eccentric lordship was once actually on the point of marriage with a Miss Clarke, whom not a creature had ever heard of, and whom he got acquainted with at a water-drinking place, when he was attending an only and beloved sister, who afterwards died there. After all, the lady used him shamefully ill;—and ever since then, what with the disappointment,—what with his excessive grief for the loss of his sister,—Lord Francis had been more fitful and capricious, and interesting, and indifferent to what people thought of him, than ever. Every creature who read his poems must see what a strange, enthusiastic, dejected being he was!”

“His poems!”

“I mean his ‘Feelings and Fancies.’”

Honoria echoed the last words almost joyfully; but Lady Haverford, not staying to inquire why she seemed so pleased, ran on to say, “although he put that ridiculous name to them, we all knew whose they were. I am so amazed you did not know Lord Francis wrote! That people here,—such nameless vulgar-ians as my Lady Sykes, and Mrs. Shafto, should be quite out of the secret, is not at all odd—but that you!—it is marvellous.”

While her gay companion continued discussing this popular volume, (popular, because printed mysteriously, and written by an admired young man of rank,) Honoria stood puzzling out the meaning of Lady Haverford’s extravagant compliment to her, at the expense of the *great* lady of Shafto Place!—yet Honoria could not guess the magnitude of such a compliment.

Secluded as she had lived, she knew not that beyond that narrow circle of rank and splendour, on which the outward world ignorantly gaze, there is yet a smaller and more worshipped one, where a motley set dwell apart, proscribing every one without. Why, and how,

these personages are adopted into this set, is a mystery only equalled by the Freemason's secret; for none of its number has ever been heard to say what qualification is required in an aspirant.

It is nor youth, nor age, nor beauty, nor ugliness, nor wit, nor dulness, nor birth, nor obscurity, nor principle, nor immorality, nor pretensions of any kind, which may obtain a place in this sacred circle. The person brought into the society, is taken as the legions of the Lower Empire choose their emperor,—for nothing—sometimes *out of* nothing. We, uninitiated, who do but peep through chinks in their wall of separation from us, may only guess at the laws and customs of these unknown people: so, whether they are regularly swayed by an hereditary chief, or only for seasons by an usurper; whether the whole body be like the mamelukes, a sort of nursery for future Beys,—or whether it be merely a politely-uproarious assembly of exquisite pretenders, all equally rule-worthy, and rule-loving, is left for better-informed heads than mine, to puzzle out and set forth;—at all events it completely baffled Honoria's; and with a noble sincerity, which actually preserved her in the place Lady Haverford's instant prepossession had bestowed on her, she asked information, and obtained it.

This was followed up by fresh raptures about Lord Francis, his acting, his singing—"the creature who could not get Lord Francis to sing one of his own impromptu melodies to them, might as well dig their grave at once!" Honoria could not forbear taxing the fair eulogist with a dangerous degree of interest in her subject.

Lady Haverford refuted the charge with every sign of sincerity.—"No—she had known Lord Francis first, when her lord was alive; and she was familiar with all that took others by surprise:—and she had no time to fall in love since Lord Haverford's death, whom by the by, she had been given to at sixteen—he was fifty, but he was the kindest, best-bred person, the most amiable husband!—Since then she had been mo-

nopolised by so many friends and relatives, that she never dreamed of marrying again. She really thought, if Lord Francis came to Ravenshaw, and saw Miss O'Hara, *his hour would come!* it should be so; Miss O'Hara should go with them to the races, and it *must* be!"

Honorina, all in a glow of confusion, pleasure, and some feeling of proud self-denial, hastily assured Lady Haverford that she was engaged to accompany the Dean of ——'s family;—and, that if she were not, she would rather forego the honour and happiness of being in Lady Haverford's company, than appearing to swell the train of any admired and arrogant person of the other sex."

"I knew it!" exclaimed the good-humoured Lady Haverford; "this is so exactly what Lord Francis would be enchanted with! You shall go your own way as well as he; though it drives me to despair not to have you with me at those races. But you shall *not* run away from me when we meet on the ground, or in the stand, or wherever these officers mean us to be. Remember, I bespeak you all to me and my party, whoever they may be."

Honorina blushed and laughed evasively. Her little head was full of wild, fluttering thoughts: images bright and rare were hovering through it, like birds among sun-clouds; all too dazzling for the sight to fix on. This extraordinary Lord Francis seemed so extraordinarily brought before her imagination by every one! From the different sketches given her of his character, it seemed exactly the sort of character to charm her wild taste, and at the same time satisfy her better-judging heart. Such noble contempt of ordinary admiration, of frivolous society, of mere rank and riches! Such deep tenderness for a sister! So interesting, too, from having loved romantically, and been cruelly rejected or deserted! He was the bard she had been admiring,—he was the champion of her dear country, at Arthur's Court! and he was coming to Ravenshaw; where, by a most singular concurrence of

unexpected events, she was now courted to visit in the most gratifying terms!

Honorina knew she was handsome,—many conquests made her suspect she could charm. Lord Francis was said to denounce taking a wife from his own set;—if then—no—she must not fancy such an improbability!—he was the second son of a marquess; and if the son might wish, the father ought not to consent to such an unequal union.

Honorina had just sense enough left, after Lady Haverford's dazzling rhapsodies, to quell her own thronging visions; and clearing her troubled brow with a smile, she proposed running back to the house. Lady Haverford, accepting the phrase literally, started off with the swiftness of an Atalanta; and Honorina, thus obliged to pursue her, both of them arrived out of breath, all bloom and laughter, at the entrance to the conservatory.

Here Honorina paused a moment to compose her looks, with respectful consideration of those she was entering to; but her privileged companion went joyously on. "We have taken such a delightful walk!" she exclaimed in her usual animated tone.

"You have taken cold," said Mr. Herbert, with a short snappish air, yet not looking up from his cards. "I trust Miss O'Hara has not done more than she ought to do," half-questioned Lady Wearmouth, yet too gently to suggest an idea of reproof.

Honorina's prompt and grateful reply satisfied her. "As for you, Gertrude," Her Ladyship continued, "you have so entirely robbed us of Miss O'Hara, in spite of herself, that I must put in a claim for a quiet day of her society, after these races, when you are gone. Meanwhile, the oftener she will come to Ravenshaw, and give us a *chance* of improving our acquaintance with her, the more agreeable will it be to my son and myself."

Honorina's speaking colour and curtsy acknowledged this pleasing solicitude for her society.

Lord Wearmouth now looked off his cards—"If we

had not unluckily been deserted by Mr. Mulcaster," he said, with momentary playfulness, "a flirtation might have proved a tolerable diversion in our favour; and Miss O'Hara might have escaped a fit of the tooth-ache."

"Mr. Mulcaster!" repeated Lady Haverford,— "that charming, entertaining, original creature! those ten days I spent with him at Sarum! we laughed through every one of them like two children! was he coming? and he has not come!"

"There lies his note," resumed His Lordship, pointing to one on a work-table; "see if you can make out his apology, for neither I nor my mother could."

Lady Haverford caught up the note, and by the aid of Honoria's better acquaintance with the young man's hand, deciphered these lines:—

"Mr. William Mulcaster entreats Lord Wearmouth's pardon for the necessity he is under of relinquishing the honour of dining at Ravenshaw to-day; he trusts that a most intolerable headache may be offered as an apology."

The difficulty in deciphering, lay in the word *headache*. Lady Haverford laughingly asserted the phrase was *heartache*; and so it indeed appeared to have been originally written; but some little rubbing and blotting had altered the letters of *heart*, into those of *head*, and it was from this smearing, that Lord and Lady Wearmouth had been puzzled.

Some pretty *badinage* about hearts and heads, passed between Lady Haverford and Mr. Pemberton, in defiance of Lord Wearmouth's grave calls for attention to their game, and the repeated pshaw! of Mr. Herbert. The latter in truth uttered that testy monosyllable so often and so quickly, that Lady Haverford fancying he sneezed, good-naturedly interrupted herself to bid God bless him.

No one could resist the comic effect of such a mistake; and all laughed therefore, except Honoria. She

stood unconsciously fixed in serious thought with the note open in her hand. She had forgotten Lord Francis Fitz James, nay, Lady Haverford herself, and with true friendly anxiety was revolving the probabilities of something having gone wrong in the affair of Major Stanhope and Jane.

☞ If a refusal had arrived from Lord Culverdon, or had been returned by the Dean, no wonder the kind brother's heart and head ached.

Her silence and changed countenance were eloquent to Lady Haverford's quick eye; with genuine warm-heartedness, though making quite a wrong guess at the primary object of Honoria's evident uneasiness, she asked her if she would accompany her in a visit to St. Cuthberts the next day?—adding, that as she had never been at Ravenshaw since she first married, she had not seen the younger ones since they were grown up, and she was dying to see if they were as lovely as their eldest sister, and half as agreeable as their brother. And she knew they were all such favourites with her aunt, that she was sure her cousin would let them have his curricule and trust her to drive it.

Lord Wearmouth nodded assent; Honoria eagerly accepted the timely proposal; nothing further was required than a fine day: Mr. Herbert shortly decided it would rain cats and dogs: Lady Haverford was gayly indifferent to any fall, short of water. She arranged a whole plan of operations. Miss O'Hara would be so good as to come first to her in Lady Wearmouth's coach, which would be returning at eleven o'clock the next morning from conveying the gentlemen present to a public meeting. Then they would get off by twelve; and if they found every body in their nightcaps at such an hour, so much the more amusing. Lady Haverford would call at Monksden on the way; then leave Miss O'Hara at St. Cuthberts without getting out herself; then proceed to Hexham Hall, and return to join the dear delightful set at Dean Mulcaster's. It would be quite easy to do all this before dinner, as Hexham was not above three miles from St. Cuthberts.

Mr. Herbert threw in his usual dampet, "It is six;" but who ever regarded Mr. Herbert out of his office! In despite, therefore, of threatened rain, and a longer road, the appointment was made; and Lady Wearmouth followed up some trifling message to one of the Misses Mulcaster, with commendations of each, and expressions of warm esteem for their father, which sincerely gratified the partial feelings of Honoria.

Soon after this important matter was settled, the carriage was announced as ready to convey Miss O'Hara home, and having received a pressure of the hand so fond and flattering from Lady Haverford, that it might have stood for an embrace, our heroine was led out by the Earl himself.

As she hurried through the hall she could not help uttering some admiring words about his fascinating relation. "Yes; she is a most popular person," was all that her frank praise extracted: she smiled at the cautious covering of a statesman's heart; then sighed to think such covering necessary. Lady Haverford had charmed her so entirely, that she wondered how any one could feel calmly toward her. Lady Haverford appeared so wholly unspoilt by the dissipated world; she displayed such tact in divining secret feelings and wishes! none but a heart of genuine sensibility could have such tact! Then such vivid affections! such ardent admiration of other persons! not a tincture of envy or superciliousness in her lively representations! such active wide-spreading benevolence too, indiscriminate as it might be! and to crown all, such accomplishments! In truth Lady Haverford was unquestionably far superior to Jane Mulcaster in charm of manner and highly developed talents; and if her heart were proved to equal that warm and generous one, must it not follow that Honoria would eventually prefer her new acquaintance to her earlier friend? A gush of kindly feelings and grateful remembrances, and new-roused sympathies, seemed to answer no, in the breast of the self-questioner; and Honoria, ashamed of having made the preference a

question, restored every thought and every wish to her first favourite companion.

CHAPTER XI.

THE next morning, our heroine's little history of her *grand visit*, as Mrs. Meredith offensively persisted in calling the quiet dinner at Ravenshaw, was detailed to her uncle's perfect satisfaction, and his wife's bitter ridicule. Mrs. Meredith, could not, however, scoff at the noble possessors of Ravenshaw; but she indemnified herself by many coarse strokes at Honoria's conceited expectations, and extravagant squandering of her paltry income in consequence; coupling these with liberal predictions of utter disappointment.

Honoria was hardly indifferent to her aunt's tongue, when it was only exercised in private: she now heard its discordant alternations without betraying any disturbance, while busying herself in little attentions to her uncle, and placing within his reach all the books and papers which he might want while she was out with Lady Haverford.

Mrs. Meredith, irritated at her niece's proposed absence for a whole forenoon, nay afternoon, when she had intended setting her to see to the bottling of the green gooseberries, actually lashed herself into a fury; so that her husband's pathetic appeals, and assurances that his niece could not with propriety refuse to accompany Lady Haverford to visit their mutual friends, were of no avail.

In the midst of this domestic din the Wearmouth carriage was announced, and Honoria escaped.

When arrived at Ravenshaw, our heroine was intercepted by the gay Viscountess's French maid, who with all the grace of a French woman, announced that her lady was not yet up, but that she entreated Miss

O'Hara would do her the favour of coming to her in her room. To Lady Haverford's sleeping-room, therefore, Honoria went.

Wherever Lady Haverford transported herself, thither were transported also multitudes of *comforts*, as this superfine attendant called luxurious and modish trifles. Pillows of the finest cambric, flounced and lined with pink; a coverlid of eider-down, quilted between satin of the same cheek-tinging colour, to do away the necessity of blankets; a portable bath; essences and pastes, and combs and brushes without end; and a dressing service of crystal and gold, strewn over a toilet-table, where lay in yet greater number and confusion, rings, armlets, necklaces, brooches; in short, every article of jewellery invented to amuse grown children. Of all these things, the appropriate cases and stands seemed only brought to add to the disorder, not to be used in diminishing it.

Every chair, every table, every sofa, had something occupying it. Books on one, music and a harp-lyre on another; bandboxes on a third; gowns and shoes on a fourth; piles of artificial flowers on a fifth; a tea-tray with every thing sliding off it, on a sixth; writing materials here, open letters there; every species in short of elegant litter and disorder.

Honoria stood in the midst of it, in comic distress, suddenly imprisoned by the impetuous recoil of sundry doors of wardrobes and closets, opened by one of the officiating priestesses of the sanctum. Lady Haverford herself was thrown back on her pillow, suffocating with mirth, after having half-started out of bed, to welcome her visiter.

Ma'mselle meanwhile won her gliding way through the chaos, with perfect ease of look and motion, issuing orders to her lady's English maid to find a seat for Miss O'Hara.

Lady Haverford patted the bed, as she would have done in invitation to her dog Zephyr; and Honoria instantly accepting the hint, sprung to the place thus offered.

"This is so dear of you," exclaimed her animated new friend. Honoria's brightly-thanking eyes, as they lifted up their deep dark shades to meet those of Lady Haverford, saw there the same witchery of heart, and hilarity, and happy temper, which had fascinated her the night before. Lady Haverford exclaimed at her good looks. But you are so handsome!—you must know you are so *very* handsome! that it's quite useless not to cry out about it. Even gruff Mr. Herbert could not find a word to stop my ravings, after you went last night, except, "She's too short!"

Honoria's laugh at her ladyship's imitation of Mr. Herbert's snappish tone, helped to cover her confusion at being thus admired to her own face; and Lady Haverford's lively spirits immediately setting off in their wildest career, left her leisure to survey every surrounding object in the room.

Not one of the appendages to a fine lady's chamber escaped our heroine's notice; but the lady herself chiefly occupied her.

A most becoming, yet dishevelled night-dress, (far remote, however, from being a comfortable one,) set off the prettiness of Lady Haverford's features, and the play of her countenance. Every thing she wore was elaborately worked, and richly laced; but frills and collars were unfastened, and one arm, from which the unbuttoned long sleeve was perpetually falling open, still retained the bracelets of the preceding evening. A night cap of Mechlin and pink riband, produced an effect quite unsuitable to the quiet period of sleep, as it just covered the back of the wearer's head, leaving half the curls of the unbandaged hair to play about the face, and torment, or heighten the beauty of the eyes.

Lady Haverford's pretty countenance and pliant form looked so charming in this negligent costume; and the vivacity of her actions, as she now rose from her pillow, now threw herself back on it, afforded so plausible an excuse for the untidy state of her bed, that Honoria would not allow herself to see or to feel that Lady Ha-

verford in her chamber was not so agreeable to her, as Lady Haverford in a drawing-room. Yet so it was : and when Her Ladyship rose and went through the customary duties of ablution and dressing, (which indeed she did with the nicest scrupulosity, and most perfect disregard of beholders, talking and laughing all the time like a child in a nursery,) Honoria's feelings of surprise and repugnance returned : nay, returned so strongly, that she had to remind herself of the force of habit, and the unavoidableness of such habits among persons never accustomed from infancy to do anything for themselves, ere she could quite forgive Lady Haverford for what seemed to her a sin against womanly delicacy.

The responsibility of Lady Haverford's appearance, being solely intrusted to the foreign maid, and the more mechanical operations of dressing falling to the share of the English one, Honoria was not a little amused by the novel scene ; and not a little amazed by the pretty Viscountess's seeming indifference to her looks after all. She seemed literally to let the able *artiste* dress her at will, out of pure easiness of temper ; and though never did prime minister more fully honour the trust of his king than ma'mselle did her lady's, still to Honoria, who set a great value upon her own inimitable taste, who would not have endured the most fashionable style of dress, had it not been exactly adapted to, or ably modified to suit her own style of person—to her, the carelessness with which Lady Haverford issued from her room, without even a glance at the glass, was absolutely magnanimous.

There was no time for seeking the dowager countess, ere they left Ravenshaw ; so into the curricule they got, and were instantly whirled off by two beautiful grays.

During their drive, Lady Haverford was most delightful, entertaining, amiable. She talked of every living person, whose names were either to be found in the peerage, or on the single page of that mysterious roll, *The Fashion*.

To Honoria, who gayly avowed herself savagely ignorant, this was like reading an amusing succession of little novels; for though nearly all the heroes and heroines of Lady Haverford's anecdotes were unknown to her, they were still human beings; and Lady Haverford sketched their characters, and gave their biography with felicitous talent: it was not their biographer's fault that they were all persons of rank or station; she knew no other. There was nothing, therefore, of parade and pretension in her repetition of their sounding names.

The longer her gay companion talked of *her* world, the more was Honoria struck by the total ignorance of such life in its interior arrangements, which was displayed by Mrs. Shafto's mode of proceeding: long before they had completed their drive, her good sense had solved the problem in this way;—that nothing being so intolerable as to see oneself badly imitated, persons of real fashion keep all pretenders to such distinction at too great a distance for the latter to discern, what are the distinctive characteristics of high breeding.

Only in two circumstances during their drive, was Honoria disappointed: Lady Haverford merely rested on Lord Francis Fitz James's name for an instant, skimming away to another young man's history; and they did not reach St. Cuthberts till an hour after the time Honoria's anxiety had calculated upon.

The last disappointment was in consequence of their being encountered on the road, by equestrians of Lady Haverford's acquaintance—dropt, as she styled it, from the skies upon distant Northumberland. Minutes flew unheeded, while questioning where they were staying; where going; what had been the end of such and such an affair known to them and herself—for Lady Haverford seemed interested and occupied for every body. Then she had to stop at Monksden, and just shake hands for a moment with Lady Henderson, who, as Emily Arundel, had been her friend and neighbour at Haverford:—at Monksden she staid half an hour, for she had found *mobs* there. Honoria smiled sincere

forgiveness, as Lady Haverford thus entreated pardon. She saw that wherever the captivating Viscountess went, she left friends and worshippers behind: a tax must be paid for such popularity,—her time and her notice at least.

To St. Cuthberts, however, they got at last. Honoria alighted: Lady Haverford went on.

The cause of Mr. Mulcaster's head and heartache was soon explained to Honoria's great relief. Lady Catherine Eustace was going to be married. After giving him all the encouragement possible:—such as dancing with him at every ball; sitting apart with him whenever they met in society; employing him on all her commissions; praising his horses; patting his dogs; wearing his favourite colour: giving him flowers; taking all the rides he recommended, though sure to encounter him in the course of them; laughing and refusing to be serious when he seriously protested he was dying for her; in short, letting him go on, making himself be set down for her absolute slave (he conscious, meanwhile, that *she* had first angled for *him*;)—after all this, she had accepted the hand of Lord Brinkbourn, offered for him, by his father to hers; and her mother had in a very civil note, as if in the common course of things, done the family at St. Cuthberts the honour of asking their congratulations upon her daughter's happy prospects.

Jane Mulcaster repeated all these heinous offences in a flame of sisterly resentment. Her dear, darling William, to be so duped!—such a heartless little coquette!—such worthless mercenariness!—she could not but love William,—she could not help loving such a dear creature so devoted to her!—how shameful, then, to accept another man! as it could only be from Lord Brinkbourn's title, such secret preference made her doubly iniquitous. But no, Jane decided the next instant that Lady Catherine could not love William, or she would have rejoiced in the opportunity of refusing a marchioness's coronet for his sake:—well!—that blindness to William's merits—that ingratitude for all his devotion

was worse than all ! Jane *might* have pardoned her, had she been in the least sensible of what she was giving up !

In short, poor Jane said all sorts of inconsistent things, as every body does when they are mortified and irritated : but every word came from a true sister's heart, judging a brother's fanciful love, by her better-founded and more seriously pursued one ; and bleeding at every vein, over his imagined sufferings.

Torrents of tears burst from her eyes as she described her brother's fury of surprise and grief when reading Lady Hexham's official despatch. With difficulty had she got him to pen those few scrawling lines to Lord Wearmouth, which were no sooner done than he had locked himself into his own room, where he now remained deaf to every petition for admittance. Ere he had thus immured himself, he had besought Jane in pity to his outraged feelings to keep his father from coming to lecture, or to laugh at him. And had declared that but for *her* sake, he would have forsworn the very sight of a woman for the whole of his coming life.

"And what has the Dean said about it?" asked Honoria, eased of her apprehensions for Jane, but compassionating the present victim.

"O, papa's speech has frightened me to death!" returned Jane, turning quite pale with remembered alarm. "He bade me go and tell my brother with his love, that he could only allow him just as many days' solitude, as he might find requisite for writing an elegy after the fashion of Hammond; for of course he must conclude, that Lady Catherine had only been the mistress of William's rhyming fancy, since he had never spoken of her seriously to his father. O, if I could have dared to have told papa then of my attachment! but my tongue absolutely clung to the roof of my mouth. Yet I feel that I cannot go on without telling him. I cannot wait for Lord Culverden's answer now. Do you advise me to tell papa? but if he should refuse—if he should be very angry?"

The sobs which now shook the bosom of Jane Mulcaster were those of deep, true distress. She had given

her heart as freely and wholly to Major Stanhope, as she was wont to do gifts of lesser value to other dear persons. The happiness of her life indeed depended upon him; for intimacy had developed qualities in him, as rare as attaching. The frequent letters of his kindred, shown solely to make his beloved Jane acquainted with all their characters, had given her deeper insight into his; and from seeing how much her Charles was doted upon by those who had known him from childhood, she felt how worthy he was of her love now, and her obedience hereafter.

Honorina pressed the weeping girl in her arms with fond sympathy; strenuously urging her not to let her present good resolution evaporate, but go directly and throw herself upon the mercy of her father, for having so long refrained from telling him the state of her affections; confessing to him her venial sin of having already made that confidence to the only person to whom, perhaps, she ought not to have made it—Stanhope himself.

Jane's courage rose and sunk several times, ere she ventured to execute this fearful task; but at length she went; whilst Honorina, who had hitherto been closeted with her alone, returned to the morning room, where they had left Miss Mulcaster and Henrietta.

The latter was known to be engaged to a young man who had just left Oxford for a curacy in Hampshire; but she conducted her sanctioned and modest attachment under such a deep shade, that it was evident she was rather incredulous of a noisy grief where the tenderest sentiment was alleged to be its source. William's room was directly over the one the party were now in; and by the stamping tread of his feet up and down its oak-floor, the occasional hurling of a chair or a table out of his disorderly path, the smothered sound of his not smothered groans, gave infallible note that he was there; and though out of sight, did not choose to be out of mind. It was, indeed, William's amiable infirmity to wish ever to be interesting to those he liked.

At another time, Honorina must have fallen back in her chair with suffocating laughter; there was some-

thing so ridiculous in such misery ; but she was in the presence of William's sisters ; and although Henrietta, with subdued archness, whispered, " That's an evident wasp sting only," would not permit herself a single pleasantry.

Miss Mulcaster's Madonna brow had a pitying shadow over it, which honoured her tenderness too much to wish it dispersed by kindless mirth :—" Every one had their different way of loving," she observed with a struggling sigh ; " and, sometimes, those likings which were thought the least of, were in fact the strongest ; the younger a person was, she thought, the warmer were their affections ; first feelings were so powerful !—Therefore she grieved for William ; and was sorry to find that he had been quite in earnest, when he had been so good-natured as to let them tease him about Lady Catherine, as if it had been only a flirtation like his other fancies before."

Honoria could suggest no better comfort than the obvious one of William's certain misery with such a worldly character as Lady Catherine now proved herself, had she deemed it worth her while to have accepted him, after failing in other views.

Upon this conclusion all parties agreed ; and they were beginning to enter into anxious discussion of Jane's concerns, when the happy girl flew in, with a face all tears and smiles ; trembling, weeping, exclaiming, hoping, wishing, dreading Stanhope's appearance with his father's answer, and invoking ten thousand blessings upon the head of her own dear father. It was easy to guess how the interview had passed.

Jane had confessed, on her knees, her attachment, and her lover's application to his parents, owning her faulty cowardice with such true contrition, that the Dean could not persist in his attempt at displeasure.

Major Stanhope, by the openness of his visits, and pointed attention to Jane, had certainly afforded her father every facility for questioning his purpose ; he, therefore, had been quite undisguised. The Dean had no quarrel with a man of delicate sentiment, for wish-

ing to ascertain a young lady's feeling towards him, ere he proposed himself to her natural guardians ; and for Jane's concealment there was the just and reasonable plea of girlish timidity and bashfulness. He had, consequently, no censuring remark to make ; except that he thought the gallant officer ought to have consulted his own father ere he ventured to press a suit which might after all be laid under an interdict.

To this Jane could promptly answer on her lover's authority, that Lord Culverden's eldest son, being unhappily disinclined to marriage, from a connexion of another sort, which had given his family the bitterest sorrow, its object being a married woman in his own circle, any honourable attachment of the second son's would be hailed as a blessing. Lord Culverden had, indeed, long ago given Charles *carte blanche* on the subject ; merely stipulating for the person of his choice having a gentlewoman's birth and breeding, with unblemished reputation ; and that the Major should either wholly renounce the army after such an union, or exchange into one of the regiments of Life Guards.

All this met with the Dean's hearty approval. "Think, too, what dearest papa ended with !" added Jane. "O, I could have kissed his very feet ! 'Don't fancy, my child,' he said, in his way, 'that I looked on, without seeing ; or should have let you fall in love unless I had been a little in love with the swain myself. When I went to see my old friend, Harvey, last year, I saw this young man at church with his men ;—he staid the sacrament, a duty so rarely fulfilled by any young man, I grieve to say, that I could not help asking who he was. Harvey said a great deal of his good conduct in that obscure quarter, which helped to fix the circumstance in my memory !' These were papa's very words ;—I could have worshipped him for them !"

Henrietta exclaimed at her father's slyness. "O, indeed, he was quite right !" repeated her sister, in haste to exonerate her beloved parent. "He had forgotten the name of this officer, till one day Charles spoke of Hythe as being quartered there ; and papa questioned

him carelessly, till he satisfied himself he was the same person ; and as he had but just observed his attention to me, he chose to wait and watch, and not influence me one way or another.—O, papa is so noble to us all !” Miss Mulcaster smothered a sigh and looked aside. Jane then hastily exclaimed, she must go and tell William, and Honoria must go with her and try to persuade him to accompany them the next day to the races. Neither the beseeching glance, nor the snatching hand of the breathless Jane, could be resisted ! Honoria flew with her up the wide old staircase, into the gallery, upon which most of the sleeping-chambers opened. They tapped at William’s door ; he did not notice it. Jane entreated admittance for herself, or a word exchanged through the key-hole with Miss O’Hara ; William answered only by some sound between a sigh and a groan. Honoria then tried her powers.

In a tone happily blending the comic and the kind, the coaxing and the reproachful, she endeavoured to reawaken his interest in the races of the next day, and in his favourite sister’s present anxieties. She hinted, that Jane had much of the agreeable to tell him, if he would only hear and answer her. Arguments Honoria never used to persons under the influence of passion ; but of persuasives she was liberal ; — and the last one, was the moving picture of his best-beloved sister’s affliction at his seeming indifference to her hopes and fears.

The duty of a disappointed man is universally allowed to be thorough despair. Mr. Mulcaster was obviously determined to maintain that notable character to the utmost. Possibly he believed himself quite in earnest ; though all who knew the expression of real anguish, must have seen that he was overacting his part, and tearing passion to rags. He pettishly begged to be left to himself ;—desiring Jane to be satisfied with the assurance that he was glad she was content,—and that he knew his father was very good ;—and all that

sort of stuff;—again requesting they would cease to trouble him.

Finding her attempt at obtaining a single glimpse of his *madmanship* ineffectual, Honoria then sought to negotiate for his appearance the next day with his sisters at Colonel Mason's breakfast. It was not probable that the Dean would go; and if he did, unless William rode on horseback by their side, Jane could not properly go with Major Stanhope in his tandem; and this she was to do, if Lord Culverden's letter were favourable. William knew how entirely Jane had set her little heart upon this gratification; nay, William had promised her the happiness.

Honoria now touched the right string, and William's kind heart was relenting to it, when poor Jane, mistaking the silence of shame for that of obstinacy, hastily added, by way of a new inducement, "Well then, dear William, if not to please me, for the sake of Captain Adair's bay filly; you know you have betted on her, as she was bred at St. Cuthberts."

If the Dean spoilt Jane, Jane spoilt William: and when he was in a wayward humour, (which circumstance occurred not unfrequently, from mere whim,) he lorded over her loving nature rather unsparingly. Indignant at her putting a wager and a bay filly, in competition with his despair and Lady Catherine Eustace, he now angrily refused further parley, telling Miss O'Hara with a violence for which she was not prepared, that "she was as great a bore as his sisters, and that he wished they were all at the ——."

The fearful name which thus burst from him unawares, was so rarely heard at St. Cuthberts, (never in a tone of levity,) that Jane, quite shocked and afflicted, burst audibly into tears; and Honoria who, affrighted as she too was, could have laughed at his moody folly, managed a submissive sigh, in compliment to the poor sister's sorrow. The door then hastily opened, and the repentant William appeared; his eyes inflamed, his locks standing erect, as his combing fingers had left them.

The expression of his features, and the conduct which had preceded this display of himself, clearly indicated that the source of the drops which actually stood upon his cheeks, was far from the heart's deep fountain. But the honest unpractised Jane saw only that her brother's handsome face was red and swollen; and the whispering kisses she lavished on him when she ran back to his embrace, testified her firm belief that he was utterly bereft of future peace.

Such tender credulity touched Honoria with instant softness, and she looked at Jane with a fervent prayer, that she might be as happy with Major Stanhope as her warmly generous nature deserved.

During the clasp of his now-comforted sister, William silently held out his hand to Honoria, in token of kindness, or of contrition. Honoria was firm to keep the other sex in what Hetty Macready termed "their proper place;" and she would not privilege her friend's brother, in unbecoming forgetfulness of what was due to a woman. "This is only a truce, remember;" she said, lightly resting her hand in his; "you are bound to appear on the Thursday at farthest to make me atonement for that shocking and wicked expression just now."

William did not answer; but his face was scarlet: as extricating himself from his sister's arms, he muttered some confused words of gentler dismissal, and retreating into his lair once more, betook himself to his allotted portion of lamentation and woe.

While the friends took a few turns up and down a long gallery ere they descended to the sitting-room, Honoria succeeded in quieting Jane's fears about her brother; advising her to let his feelings, whatever they were, exhale themselves after any fashion he chose; and be sure that they would then be speedily exhausted. She then renewed the subject of Jane's own promising affairs; gladly agreeing to keep her engagement of letting herself be sent for the next day: not merely to accompany them on the next, to the races, but to stay at St. Cuthberts for as many days as Mrs. Meredith would permit. If Lord Culverden were propitious,

then Honoria was to share the general joy; if he were not, she was to stay and weep with her friend far from the hated sounds of running horses, and martial music.

Luckily for the business going on at St. Cuthberts, Honoria was not called for till very late; so that she had full time to vent all her admiration of Lady Wearmouth, to bless her stars for the good fortune of her uncle's hospitality to Captain Barrington, and to learn from the Misses Mulcaster that they too had shared in the mother's joy, when they called at Ravenshaw the day Lord Wearmouth and William walked to the Rectory.

At last Lady Haverford fluttered in; instead of a quarter of an hour, she had staid a full hour at Hexham Castle. Such *crowds* were staying in the house, all of whom she knew! and Lady Catherine was so amusing! and Lady Hexham had such *LOADS* of pretty things to show her, that were already sent ~~to~~ her daughter by Lord Brinkbourn's relations! and Lord Hexham was so pompous and foolish! All this the volatile Viscountess hurried out with her usual vivacity and volubility, quite unconscious of the painful interest taken in it by William's sisters, and totally mistaking the meaning of the Dean's smile as he listened to her, after coming courteously out of his study to welcome her and Honoria. But suddenly stopping, she resumed with a burst of delight at the sight of her old acquaintance the Misses Mulcaster grown from children into women; insisting that she herself must be a hundred years old at least; and inquiring with the utmost unction after the *too enchanting* brother.

With happy address, yet not speaking falsely, Sophia Mulcaster contrived to leave Lady Haverford in the error of believing he was not in the house, so further questioning was spared; and her gay Ladyship having first adjusted the Dean's easy chair, then hastily picked up somebody's glove, (for Lady Haverford did every thing for every body,) drew a worked hassock close to the great chair, and sat down at the Dean's feet to go

on with her pretty gossip. The good divine was well inclined to give her plenty of line : never man angled more ably than he did, for all the nonsense of Lady Catherine.

"Lady Catherine showed me Lord Brinkbourn's picture," she added, "so exquisitely set ! He's dreadfully ill-looking, you know, poor man—but so clever ! and she really seems attached to him. I understand now from herself, that she liked him from the first, and had set her heart upon having him from the first moment they met last Christmas at Chatfield."

"I don't doubt it," returned the Dean dryly.

"Well ! I never should have fancied such a thing possible !" resumed Lady Haverford, who never took time to undeceive herself from imposition of any sort. "When I saw them at Chatfield, I thought she was caring for that very agreeable great fortune, Harvey Dalton : so, like a simpleton, I frequently rode miles away from them, when I was chaperoning her on horseback, carrying off the Marquis, and leaving her with Mr. Dalton.—How we laughed over my mistake, when she told me how often she wished me poisoned for my pains !"

"Doubtless !" responded the Dean : "particularly if Mr. Dalton did *not* propose himself and his great fortune, during your good-natured feint." "Henrietta !" he added, lowering his voice, and turning quietly to his third daughter, "do you know of any conducting tube from this room to the one above ?"

Henrietta's arch, yet half-upbraiding glance showed she understood him ; the Dean exalted his voice, "Your Ladyship speaks so softly :—I wish you could speak louder. I would fain fancy I am a little deaf to-day."

Lady Haverford tried to make her musical tones more sounding ; but they could not reach William ; though from the consciousness of *an arrival* below, he was now perfectly still. However she went on.

"It is quite refreshing to see a match of inclination ! Lady Catherine was actually beside herself with joy ;

she *would* show me all the clothes and jewels,—such a superb suit of diamonds!—Lady Hexham, you know, never had any but the poorest things; so the poor dear girl, (so like a very young girl!) was in ecstasies to think she should actually have a finer necklace, than the Princess Royal had on at her marriage! Never could she be grateful enough to Lord Brinkbourn; if she devoted her whole life to him! She positively said that.—I really never before gave her credit for such a grateful character.”

“Wonderful indeed!” exclaimed the Dean composedly; “so grateful for a diamond necklace! the pretty neck itself would of course offer itself to the axe, for any solid good to its generous donor.”

Lady Haverford, without detecting the satire of this speech, continued to run on after nodding assent to the supposed compliment. “It is not quite settled whether they are to be married here, or in London: but some of her clothes are come down. One of the gowns was so ridiculously fine, that it made us die of laughing. Lady Catherine was so comical upon it; and (lowering her voice, and bending to the ear of Honoria,) so very amusing about her pretty nightcaps: she wondered how the Marquis would look in *his* nightcap—and quizzed his long chin so good-humouredly!—But what are you doing, my dear Mr. Dean?—what can you be writing, while I am speaking so fast? Not taking minutes of my discourse I hope, as was the fashion in Sir Charles Grandison’s days.”

The Dean calmly folded and twisted up the bit of paper he had been writing on with pencil, and whisperingly bidding Henrietta slip that under her brother’s door, renewed attention to her Ladyship.

Lady Haverford, in defiance of the world’s efforts to make her otherwise, was yet in many respects as single-hearted as Jane Mulcaster herself; and she was now so far from suspecting any design to draw her out, on the subject of her visit to Hexham, that she kept ~~thanking~~ the party present for not being as thoroughly bored, as she could see by his yawning her poor

Zephyr was ; and on she went, therefore, with a *naïveté* and hilarity, which pleased every one in spite of their subject. Thus unconsciously unmasking one of the most hollow-hearted, place-coveting young persons that had ever yet trafficked herself for a coronet.

Another half-hour was thus sportively played away ; so that by the time Lady Haverford drove up to the Rectory, it was five o'clock, and the footboy had to rid his hands of the tea-tray ere he could run and open the gate of the fore-court to the truant Honoria.

Lady Haverford, quite unobservant of all that humbled the poor proud orphan in her home, bade her a thousand flattering farewells ; assuring her, she meant to remain at Ravenshaw as long as her aunt would now keep her, "solely to cultivate intimacy with her, and those charming St. Cuthbert girls ;" reminding our heroine that on the Thursday they *must* unite into one party. Honoria joyfully gave the promise demanded, and the pretty Viscountess drove off.

This was certainly a day of blissful augury to Honoria, for she could actually walk into her aunt's parlour, with Ned and the tea-equipage : and having providently entreated to be forgotten at dinner, as her return must depend upon Lady Haverford, her slice of mutton and glass of wine were saved ; and Lord Wearmouth had sent Mrs. Meredith some spring venison with a polite card ! Mrs. Meredith, therefore, was not more than taunting ; and Honoria *could* present her the note from Dean Mulcaster, which was to remind those at the Rectory of Miss O'Hara's engagements with his daughters, and to say the carriage would be sent for her on the ensuing forenoon. Mr. Meredith overruled a rising objection, by some timely remark about a Stilton cheese, which Miss Mulcaster had told him was on its way to his lady, in company with one for their own use.

CHAPTER XII.

THE next day was May-day. Honoria arose with the lark, to gather flowers and twist garlands, and dress a band of children, who were to go their usual rounds, with clean-washed faces and pretty curtsies, collecting praises and pence.

She met the eager imps in her own garden, on the hill side ; where, seated in her arbour-tree, she made a score of young hearts happy, by making as many little figures as fine as flowers and ribands could dress them ; and by garlanding a cosset lamb to walk along with them.

Her picturesque fancy was full of remembered groups of nymphs and sacrificial animals, seen on plaster casts of antique vases ; and as her graceful hands involved the long tresses of ivy and briony, round the creature's neck and budding horns, she could not help talking aloud to herself of Arcadia and Tempe, of the Floral games, and the altars of Pan.

Having admired her own work with audible laughing emphasis ; bestowed a little May-day gift upon each of her waiting attendants, (accompanied with a kiss and an exhortation to be good children, and keep out of mischief,) she dismissed them, and helped their lamb over a stile leading to the first farm they were bound to. Then, after pondering awhile upon childhood, and its simple, yet fervid enjoyments, she was turning with a pensively-altered look towards her home ; when a young man, starting up from the grass on the other side of the hawthorn hedge, skirting her garden, looked over it, directly beside her.

Honoria never stopped to ascertain whose were the eyes that she felt, and was conscious of having met before. Ashamed of being detected not in the act of making May garlands, but in lauding them to herself ; —aware, from the young man's expression of countenance, that he must have been peeping at her through

the hawthorn, during the whole scene; she sprang away, and ran with such haste down her garden into the waste of that name, belonging to the Rectory, and thence into the house, that she left one of her slippers behind.

Every pulse was throbbing with fright and flight, when she threw herself, quite out of breath, upon the bed in her chamber. She was ashamed; she was hurried; she was convinced that the eyes which now troubled her recollection, were those of her knight of the shamrock. Yet if it were Mr. Gubbins, or rather Lord Francis Fitz James, why should she care so very much at his having overheard her folly?

But it could not be that finest of fine men. Lord Francis Fitz James out before seven o'clock in the morning? Impossible! Lord Francis Fitz James, who had been at a dinner in London only two days before! It was not likely. Yet, if it were indeed Lord Francis, she should now know him:—she should see him under the most favourable auspices; in the encouraging society of Lady Wearmouth, flatteringly represented by Lady Haverford, affectionately spoken of by his friend Mr. Mulcaster! If he did not quite take a disgust to her silliness with the May children, she might even hope to banquet upon sympathy with his romantic feelings and poetical taste; she might hear with her own ears, some of that eloquence which had been described to her by Captain Fitz Arthur, as exercised in support of her charge against the country of Mr. Frazer; in short, she might, in downright earnest, try to lose her heart to him, and win his.

Such a mixed character was Honoria, or rather so imperfectly was the dross cleared from her golden sense, that she first yielded to this absurd imagination; then saw its absurdity, and laughed at herself: "A man of whom I know nothing, except that he writes verses, and gives himself airs!" With this exaggerated exclamation, she started up from her resting place, and magnanimously fled from the foul fiend solitude, into the wholesome atmosphere of certain active virtues, sure

to be roused and exercised by herself and her uncle, at the breakfast-table of Mrs. Meredith.

The breaking of a sugar-basin caused a tempest of an hour's duration; and Honoria, having adventurously endeavoured to divert the storm from the pale, rueful lad, between whose finger of grease, and thumb of soot, the luckless bowl had perished—was on the verge of being commanded to take off her bonnet; and give up all notion of going to idle at St. Cuthberts, when the Dean's coach was announced, and the Stilton cheese appeared. During the latter article's examination, our heroine smiled adieu to her uncle, and curtsying, unseen to her aunt, glided out of the parlour.

She found her little trunk in the carriage, under the care of Mrs. Wood, the Dean's housekeeper, who was commissioned to tell Miss O'Hara, from Miss Jane, that she was far too happy to write. Mrs. Wood was qualified to explain the message she delivered. Many years of tried fidelity, as the late Mrs. Mulcaster's personal servant, sanctioned her in speaking warmly, though with the utmost respect, of her young lady's prospects.

Honoria's heart overflowed with joy for her friend, when she heard that Major Stanhope had that morning been with the Dean even before breakfast, with proposals for Miss Jane: they had been found acceptable; and as soon as settlements could be made out, they were to be married.

Lovers are generally liberal;—successful ones are always in good humour: so, of course, Major Stanhope had secured the favour of all the domestics at St. Cuthberts by a due distribution of smiles and money, whenever the slightest service afforded him a pretence for offering them. Mrs. Wood could quote every servant in the house, from the butler to the cow-boy, for some laudatory testimonial. Honoria listened, with pleased attention, to every circumstance which could throw more light upon the character of him, to whom a pure, inexperienced, impressible heart was committing its happiness for this life—perhaps for that which is to come. She audibly lamented the absence of their mutual friend

Mrs. Preston, who would have rejoiced so animatedly with her, for Jane's sake ; and to whom Honoria ever longed to fly with every joy or grief of her own. But this was another agreeable surprise Mrs. Preston's absence had deprived her of the power of giving her. Every thing connected with Ravenshaw, together with her discovery of her knight of the shamrock being, in fact, Lord Francis Fitz James ;—every part of this she had only been able to narrate with her pen ; and as Mrs. Meredith nearly exterminated the postman whenever he brought a letter, Honoria was ever afraid of inviting answers ; therefore knew it must be long ere she could dare to write again to her maternal friend.

Casting a sighing glance towards Hazeldean, as the carriage drove down the village, she begged the coachman to stop at the small tenement where lodged the *cidévant* schoolmistress of Edenfell. Dame Wilson was childishly fond of flowers ; and Honoria regularly brought her a nosegay every May-day. She now prayed Mrs. Wood to wait a moment, while she ran up stairs with her fragrant offering.

The neat bed in which Dame Wilson lay, was placed, for a cheerful look-out, so near the only window of her chamber, that, as Honoria sat down, she saw every object on the opposite side of the lane. The door of a mean house there, was thronged round by children, and one or two grown persons ; through the midst of whom a young man, with one arm resting in a silk handkerchief by way of sling, was seen smilingly passing from the door, taking his way towards the village inn.

The figure of this young man, the clustering of his raven hair round a brow of marble—nay, the colour of the handkerchief, transferred from his throat to his arm, leaving the former in free and noble beauty,—brought back at once, before Honoria, the vision of him who had surprised her on the hill side : him, whom she had first seen at Arthur's Court, and knew to be her countryman.

It was then Lord Francis Fitz James ! Her whole face was in a glow : while hastily inquiring what had

happened in the cottage opposite, a girl, whom Captain Fitz Arthur had placed about his old school-dame, simply answered, that some of the May children, having thoughtlessly got into a cart by themselves, were trying to drive it, when the horse suddenly set off full speed, and was tearing down towards the steep bank of the river, when a gentleman, who had come to the Unicorn Inn just after sunrise, and had been loitering about with a pen and a pencil all the morning, threw himself between the cart and the stream; and seizing the horse's head, with instant presence of mind, saved the shrieking children from probable death. The jerk of the horse's head had, however, sprained his shoulder. and one of the little culprits' mothers had just been tying it up in his own handkerchief.

Had the performer of this amiable action been actually a perfect stranger to her, Honoria would have gone over to the house and asked a hundred particulars concerning him: but now some unaccountable feeling made her sensible that she should show embarrassment, with too lively an interest, and she was therefore obliged to be satisfied with this scanty detail.

Secretly assured of seeing this handsome and heroic personage at the races on the morrow, (if he were indeed Lord Francis Fitz James,) she kissed Dame Wilson with more than her wonted affectionateness, and retook her place in the carriage.

During her unusually silent drive with worthy Mrs. Wood, who, nevertheless, kept talking all the time of her ladies, it is humiliating to own that Honoria's reveries were fuller of herself, and her knight of the shamrock, than even of her friend Jane and her substantial happiness; it is to be hoped, that the very substance of that happiness may be an excuse for her thus wandering after uncertain visions.

What a figure, what a face her eyes had been eagerly scanning!—what poetical paleness on the cheek!—what nobleness on the brow, and in the fine moulding of the short upper lip!—(that distinctive mark of Grecian beauty)—what inspiration in the air of the head,

rising as it did from the open shirt-collar!—and that smile! Apollo himself, throned in his own light, had no beam so gracious!

Honorina was in fact under a dazzlement of admiration, partly deserved by its object, partly produced by her own exalted fancy, in consequence of numberless trivial circumstances, calculated to excite interest, and stimulate curiosity. She was, besides, half convinced that she ought to fall in love with such a wonder of mind and person; and not very incredulous of her power of charming him in return.

The very arrogance of this feeling might have told Honorina that, as yet, not one spark from "Love's own altar" had fallen upon her heart; but Honorina was only beginning life, and knew nothing of her heart.

At St. Cuthberts she was received with tumultuous joy. How are they to be pitied who cannot feel the joy of sympathy! For the first five minutes nothing was said or done but embracing, kissing, exclaiming, congratulating, thanking, blessing, over and over again.

Honorina passed from the arms of one person to another, laughing and crying like Jane herself; the more strongly excited to the first movement by the sight of William Mulcaster standing among them, with a face quite as joyful as any other person's. She was too much afraid of giving him a hint to play the desperate lover, for audible expression of her satisfaction.

After the clamour of rapture had subsided, she was told circumstantially all the past and future plans of the lovers. Major Stanhope was not to quit the army, for he liked having something to do, and he was fond of regimental business. He was, therefore, to effect an exchange into one of the heavy-dragoon regiments, which were never sent abroad except on occasions of imminent danger. A vacancy in one of these was sure to occur directly; he was quite positive he should hear of a Majority in the Blues, or in one of the regiments of Life Guards, and there was not the smallest chance of his present corps being ordered for foreign service meanwhile.

Jane was determined to believe every thing she wished ; so her face was all smiles, her young heart all happiness, gratitude, and kindest affections ; and she was already bespeaking a "long, never-ending visit" from Honoria very soon after her marriage ; when Mr. Mulcaster ringing to know if his horse were ready, abruptly said he was going to ride over to Ravenshaw.

Honoria's foolish heart-flutter began again :—William faced directly round upon her. "Well, Miss O'Hara," he cried, with a glance of mischievous meaning, "your hour, and my friend Gubbins's is come ; my fellow passed him in one of the green lanes by Edensell this morning, where he was sauntering about, after his usual fashion of idling, and rhyme-tagging. You will be pleased to remember that I mean you and Gubbins for each other."

Honoria's exaggerated laughter gave excuse for her heightened colour, as she confusedly answered, "I put in my protest against any such disposal of my invaluable self, until I learn the reasons of the *alias* after your friend's name."

William now saw his secret was discovered, and a general disclosure of it, of course, ensued. Jane tried to scold Stanhope for having assisted in keeping it ; Sophia proclaimed her hope of enlisting his admired Lordship into her army of followers ; while her sisters quietly observed they should not wonder if his capricious temper made him shut himself up wholly in Ravenshaw, and so disappoint general expectation. As Mr. Mulcaster could not give even a conjectured reason for His Lordship's masquerading in a green shade and light wig at Arthur's Court, and departing thence without making himself known to a single creature there—this caprice did not appear improbable : and though Honoria felt some diminution in her estimate of his character in consequence, still she was conscious that not to see Lord Francis at the races would be a mortification.

"But why did he call himself by such a ridiculous, frightful name?" inquired Sophia.

"From mere whim of course," replied Major Stanhope, "or because he wished his acquaintance to know he wrote that little volume of verses, and did not want to be puffed or cut up by reviewers on account of his nobility. I remember, it was his cant name at Oxford."

"What a name!" Honoria involuntarily exclaimed, "for such a creature!"

"There lay the joke!" cried Mr. Mulcaster; "there would have been no fun in an Augustus Walsingham, or Henry Melville. He got it tacked to him, from a quiz coming up to him one day in the street, and inquiring if his *name wasn't Mr. Peter Gubbins*. From that moment we never called him anything else, when he was in the humour to bear it!" William then hurried on to declare his fixed resolution of bringing Lord Francis on the instant to St. Cuthberts, that he might fall a victim to the bright eyes, in whose service he had gained the palm of eloquence at Arthur's Court: and as the utter discomfiture of Mrs. Shafto appeared to have a principal share in this notable determination, a full confession of all that lady had said about Honoria and Captain Fitz Arthur was unawares made by William and his sisters.

This was, indeed, pouring oil upon fire: Honoria scarcely spoke; but her proud look, and quivering lips, threatened dire mishap to the luckless and unoffending person, whose preference had excited such envy and malignity. If Lord any one had offered his hand at that moment, it is to be feared she would have accepted it.

Appearing to disdain the whole subject, she drew closer to Mr. Mulcaster, and asked him rather archly, "If he were going to bet upon Captain Adair's bay filly on the fells to-morrow?" William comprehended her meaning. "Yes I am!" he answered fairly. "After all I had written up to me, and told afterwards to me, by Jane there, do you think I would waste as much breath as would blow out a candle, upon sighing over such a counterfeit soap-bubble?—not I!—I am come to my senses, and you shall see me take my re-

venge to-morrow in glorious style ! But if ever I care one iota again for any of your false sex,—” “Pick out my eyes with a ballad-maker’s pen !” added the Dean entering, and quoting Benedict with more than his usual hilarity. William intercepted in the door-way, stopped respectfully to let his father pass him, though colouring high ; then hurried off, beyond the reach of his gibes.

“Well, Miss O’Hara ;” said the cheerful divine, advancing with the ceremonious mien and cordial look of antiquated manners ; “so you come to find my Jane out of her senses with joy at the speedy prospect of leaving an indulgent father.”

Jane’s soft hand was fondly pressing in his, as he took the seat by her side which Stanhope had promptly and properly quitted. The Dean continued : “And you have come too late for our *auto de fê* this morning : it took place at six o’clock.”

Honorina inquired his meaning.

“Oh, we have been silent witnesses of William’s sacrifice to the indignant gods, of all the treasures he had accumulated during the course of his long and painful love for Lady Catherine Eustace. That lucky bit of short-hand which I had insinuated through a chink of his door yesterday, had the most complete success : after reading it, he issued forth from his den, breathing scorn and hatred to all your dissembling sex. I therefore look to hear of him next among the monks of La Trappe, or else associating with that meritorious gentleman, whom the London papers sometime ago designated by the name of *the Monster*.”

“Papa, dear papa,” cried Jane, imploringly. The Dean was in his garrulous mood, and would not be stopped. Honorina’s bright eyes were quite lost among their dark lashes with excess of mirth ; then shone out in full inviting joyance. Their brilliant encouragement was not lost upon the speaker.

“There were such piles of satin paper burnt ! one heap, all sonnets and songs—another, little scraps and scrawls with the fair lady’s own name, written by her

own fair hand in all modes and moods ; of course she had never *committed* herself by writing to him from herself. But there were charmingly flattering notes in her mother's name, of the same elegant penwomanship. Morsels of gauze—ends of riband—broken fans—visiting tickets—a dozen white gloves at least without fellows—baskets full of withered roses and violets—an old artificial flower or two, intermixed—a pencil caricature of the fond swain himself, done by the fair Inconstant, nearly effaced by his own kisses—and last, not least, a charming pocket-handkerchief, the cambric admirably wrought in hearts and darts at the corners, and the body of the interesting article slightly tinged with a little bloom from the cheek of its most singularly inartificial owner. No wonder this *morceau* was the last given to the flames. On my word, I think William never saw his mistress's bloom on it till that very moment, if I may hazard a guess from the expression of his countenance."

"And where could you have the barbarity, dear sir, to stand and witness all this?" asked Honoria, scarcely able to hush her laughter at such a ludicrous picture.

"I took a quiet peep from my dressing-room window," returned the Dean ; being confidentially apprised of what was about to take place ; I there stationed myself behind a sloped shutter, and so beheld William, as he stood on the grass-plot below, sacrificing to Vulcan. It was a pleasing sight ; and I could not help putting my head out at its conclusion, crying, 'So perish all the enemies of William Mulcaster.' I ought rather to have said, 'So perish every memorial of every coquette.' Craving pardon, however, of all such young ladies as may be emulating that high character.—My daughter Sophy, of course."

"Now, papa, you are absolutely odious," exclaimed Sophia, with hardy cheerfulness. "You know I have been trying all my life to make somebody like me well enough to give me an opportunity of using them ill, and I have never succeeded yet."

"All in good time, child ; all in good time !" repeated the Dean : and if you don't succeed in using some silly youth as ill as Lady Catherine has done William, you will infallibly play the trick to your father, as—"

Jane's hasty, affectionate kiss, stopped the words that were to follow. Major Stanhope made a pathetic appeal in defence of his fair betrothed, and softer feelings awakening, the Dean at once discarded his bantering tone, and fell into conversation that honoured his character, both as a parent and a divine.

Major Stanhope having recovered from the temporary confusion into which his future father-in-law had thrown him by his jesting reproach, was soon drawn advantageously forth ; and a succession of family anecdotes were given by him in answer to the Dean's apparently careless questions, which tended to strengthen the prepossession already felt for him by all his auditors.

William staid at Ravenshaw so long, that he reappeared only when the family were sitting down to dinner. He came back manfully fortified in his resolutions against female influence.

Lord Francis had owned to having been once very ill-used, as well as himself, (though William could not get at the lady's name or fate,) and they had railed at the sex in good set terms—at all of them, indeed, except his own sisters, Honor O'Hara, and Lord Francis's grandmother.

"And why Lord Francis's grandmother?"

"Because he begged it."

"And why Honor O'Hara?" Honoria did not ask that question.

"Why, because Lord Francis had first put in an especial plea for his kind old grandmother ; and William chose to have his brand out of the fire as well as he ; and because Lord Francis vowed he had seen her that very morning sheep-shearing : moreover, he had got a certain slipper, either of hers or Cinderella's, which he meant to keep and worship."

"Thou art a miserable Bozzy to thy Johnson !" ex-

claimed his father. "Surely the classical Lord Francis talked rather of the silver-footed Thetis.—That poor slipper ! I foresee its fate !"

"What fate, sir ?" William unluckily questioned.

"Burning, my son!—burning !"

William looked foolish, and Honoria blushed : not that she suspected it would die the death of fire, in consequence of her scorn or inconstancy.

Jane Mulcaster, whose heart was always open to expectations and wishes for her friends, and who was now too happy herself not to desire to see every body the same, in the same way, exchanged a glance with Stanhope, which distinctly said, "*Now we'll make that match, if we can !*"

"What a wonderful portion of free-masonry may lie in a single look !" observed her father, intercepting the glance. "You and Major Stanhope are Grand Masters, evidently : poor Miss O'Hara, and I, are but novices !—however, I must beg to have the mystery cleared up, of Miss O'Hara's sheep-shearing, and Cinderella's slipper."

Honoria, thus called upon, was obliged to repeat not only her adventure before breakfast, (taking care, however, to do it as negligently as possible,) but her second glimpse of Lord Francis at the end of Edenfell. William burst out triumphantly : "There, sir !—now you'll allow that Lord Francis has something more in him than fancies and dictatorialism !—Many a fellow would have gone on and never troubled his head about the cart or the children. When I asked him what he had done to his arm, he just said he had hurt it somehow,—and not a word more. Nobody at Ravenshaw knew any thing about it."

"Well ! you may bring your fine gentleman here," replied the Dean, with a face expressive of satisfaction : "though I was somewhat prejudiced against him. You may ask him to dinner when you like."

William actually laid down his knife and fork, and stared at his father with eyes as red as his cheeks, through astonishment.

"*May* ask him to dinner!—faith, I *may* ask him; but the query is, whether he'll come. When a man is in such request as Lord Francis is, he generally finds out that he is considered to confer honour, not to receive it."

"Why then, let me tell you, sir," returned his father, dryly, "that the young man who does not consider himself honoured by being invited into the domestic circle of an old Christian minister, with four virtuous daughters round him, is either a great deal too high, or too low for my acquaintance. However, he may settle that question himself—for he shall be asked to St. Cuthberts with all the respect due to his rank, and your regard for him."

The kind tone in which the Dean concluded, effaced whatever had been unpleasant in the rebuke given by his first words. William, so encouraged, proceeded to talk of his Eton days, when he had been the fag of Frank Fitz James, and almost spoilt by his indulgences.

"But haven't I some impertinent recollections," resumed his father, "about his former fag; a lad of our county too, whom he lorded over with memorable exercise of power?"

William explained that, by saying the boy was disagreeable in himself, and not affectionate; adding, that when once a person convinced Lord Francis they would do any thing to please him, they might do what they liked ever afterwards, and he would go to death for them.

"How generous! how very attaching!" involuntarily burst from the lips of Honoria.

"You ladies are bound to think so," observed the Dean, smiling. "You ought to dignify the love of power by the name of a virtue, since it is your own besetting sin. And can any thing be so generous or so fine, as paying one's debts—loving them that love us?"

"Oh, if my father is going to give us his pulpit talk—" William's irreverent, because petulant whisper, did not escape his father's quick ear; he noticed

it by a look that made the feeling of shame do more than colour his son's cheek ; then with an eye expanding again into playfulness, he resumed to Honoria : " It was certainly most magnanimous in the stripling Lord Francis, never to knock the child William down, every time he broke bounds for him, and risked a flogging to get His Lordship perhaps a penn'orth of whipcord ! Most engaging in him, not to wring the meek boy's neck off, while the child stood to hear himself arraigned for faults and neglects he never was guilty of ! Most godlike in bounty too, while bestowing a cheese-cake upon the urchin whom he had previously starved into telling a lie on his account,—not to mention the high lesson of virtue this honourable practice teacheth !"

Both William and Major Stanhope having been Eton boys, spoke at once in the same vehement and declamatory tone. The Dean laughed, and said, " Well, I'll allow my picture is absolute caricature ; yet will I maintain seriously, that it is no great commendation of a man to say he is kind to those who nearly deify him ! I grant that it is unwise to let affection increase to fondness for persons to whom we are matters of indifference ; but unless we regard our associates more from their intrinsic qualities, than their particular preference for us, we are but lovers of our own selves. I have generally found that those who have professed inability to esteem goodness for its own sake, were persons inclined either to self-conceit or to tyranny. However, in spite of the fantastic fooleries I hear said of William's idol, I am quite willing to believe he is defamed in descriptions given by the bad taste of his worshippers ; and Miss O'Hara seems not disinclined to the same laudable skepticism, till she may judge for herself."

Honoria's mantling blush was ready to answer in the affirmative, as she said, " I remember your son once told me that when he broke his arm at Eton, and could not be moved from fever, Lord Francis staid with him through part of the vacation, to nurse and amuse him. That makes me inclined to like His Lordship in spite of his arrogance."

"Yes, nothing could be kinder than he was!" exclaimed William triumphantly.

"Ah yes! I cry him mercy, I had forgotten it!" was the Dean's remark. "But your mother would not; so to Ravenshaw I will go, for her dear sake as well as yours, William."

Miss Mulcaster, seeing her father's eyes suffuse at the mention of her mother, whom she alone had been of an age to appreciate fully, considerably asked some question about the rest of the party at Ravenshaw.

William had brought various congratulations on Jane's prospects from Lady Wearmouth, who was not yet allowed to go out, even in her carriage. Lady Haverford he had only encountered in the hall as he was coming away, for she had been out the whole forenoon and afternoon paying visits; but she would be at the officer's gala the next day, and so would Lord Francis. Lady Haverford had sent ten million of loves to Miss O'Hara by him, with the assurance that the whole thing would lose its charm to her, if any thing kept Miss O'Hara away.

"Methinks the Lady doth profess too much!" muttered the incorrigible Dean.

Honorina looked up at him with one of her most beseeching eyebeams, clasping her hands together in mock petition, "O sir! pray sir! do not blight all my fancies! Now you have nearly demolished my idolatry of my country's champion, do spare me my new acquaintance Lady Haverford."

"I will spare her then," exclaimed the Dean, "for the sake of that respectably moderate term, acquaintance. Since she has not already inveigled you into calling her your friend, as she would immediately have done by credulous Jane.—I am content. But I must find a fault in you among others. Prithee consider what a sorry return this moderate phrase sounds for ten million of loves!"

"Do let us run away, Isabella," cried Sophia, starting up from the dessert; "Papa is in his most mis-

chievous humour, so we had better take wing at once."

"Not without authority;" cried the Dean, as the young ladies rose simultaneously. "I am full as jealous of power as my Lord Francis Fitz James himself, or his humbler imitator, my son, there. One moment!—I dissolve the house!—Now unworthy members you may withdraw."

Even Honoria was not sorry to escape from the fanciful inquisition of the Dean's and William's eyes, while Lord Francis was spoken of. Never till now had she thought the reverend humourist's raillery more caustic than amusing; but never till now had she felt personally bitten by it. Many of his observations, though allowed to be overcharged, dwelt in her thoughts, buzzing and stinging like gnats, as often beaten off, as often returning. And as her inclination to like both Lord Francis and Lady Haverford was strong in proportion to their evident wish of inspiring regard, she revolted at the notion of the one being actuated by the mere love of power, the other by a feverish wish for popularity.

On quitting the dining-parlour, Miss Mulcaster retired to her established settlement of work and work-table, in a window-recess of the large India-papered sitting-room, pursuing there some ruminations of her own in pensive silence. Sophia betook herself to the review of her attire for the morrow, as it was proceeding under the needle of her maid. Henrietta stole away for an hour's solitude in her chamber, where she was accustomed to devote much of her time in qualifying her mind, as well as her heart, for sympathy with the high pursuits of her future partner through life. Jane and Honoria went to walk round the floyer-garden, that Jane might talk solely of her Charles, till he should join them and repossess himself of her ear, and her eyes.

Music, chess, and whispered tendernesses on the part of Major Stanhope, filled up the evening after the scattered party reassembled in the drawing-room. Family

prayers concluded it;—sanctifying the blameless cheerfulness of previous good spirits, and privileging those who thus gave God thanks for past and present mercies, in believing that future blessings would be yielded to their hopes; or that, if these were to be withdrawn, strength to bear up under the dispensation would be granted to the feeble soul.

If men were quite in the secret of women's hearts, it is to be feared that some who are without the grace of devotional impulses, would often affect them: for when does the manly head appear so noble as when bowed in the act of reverence to Him, "who made man after his own image?"

As Honoria's eye glanced momentarily over the kneeling figures of Major Stanhope, and William Mulcaster; remarking the unaffected humility of both their countenances, she could not but recall a similar scene at Arthur's Court, where she had once passed a night since Delaval was its inmate. The artless piety in the face of good Sir Everard,—the holy fervour kindling more and more on Hylton's pale brow, the reverential attention of a long train of servants grouped behind Mrs. Fothergill,—and the deeply penetrating tones of Fitz Arthur's voice,—all these were present to her on the instant, with a fulness of feeling which she wondered why she felt. Aware, however, that sound religious principles would ever be of the first consequence to her, she inwardly resolved to ascertain those of her imaginary favourite, ere she really suffered him to engross one partial thought.

With this laudable resolution, she exchanged good nights with her surrounding friends, and retired to the tranquillity of her own chamber.

CHAPTER XIII.

MAY-DAY at Arthur's Court brought agitation and events there too.

Delaval Fitz Arthur reached Morpeth in the mail, by daybreak; whence he proceeded in a chaise to his own home. As the hall-door was opened for him by the gray-headed porter, the sounds echoing through that and the passages, made him well aware that his youngest brother was come home; and in the full exercise of all the rights and privileges of the most rebellious and uproarious boy "ever unwhipt of justice." Smacking of whips, hurling of weights, bursting of crackers, crashing of pottery balanced on window or door-frames, shrill whistles, squalls, shouts of "Mrs. Fothergill! Mrs. Fothergill!" all over the house, with other indescribably hideous sounds, announced that Master Thomas had reassumed the sceptre of power and plague.

Fitz Arthur, upon whom a shower of burs fell from an upper window, just as he was getting out of the chaise, entered the house, laughingly picking them off his coat sleeve, though quietly determined to put an end to his brother's mischievous habits, and poor Mrs. Fothergill's terror of him, in a very short time.

Thomas was self-destined to the navy; and as a completely classical education was not necessary to make a boy brave, or skilful as a sailor, his brother had obtained Sir Everard's consent to have him taken from school, and left to his management for mathematics, and such bodily exercises as might fit him for an active and dangerous profession. Fitz Arthur knew that a thorough knowledge of Latin would render the acquirement of most modern tongues easy to the boy; in that he was qualified to perfect him: but he had the culture of religious principles, and self-governing habits, far more at heart than any other acquirements, and to

that desirable end, he meant seriously to devote his every power. With his thoughts upon this subject, he passed through the hall.

Sir Everard met him at the door of his own snug morning room, where, had it not been for the flow of unwonted satisfaction spread over his generally calm countenance, his son might have supposed him indifferent to the details of the momentous business which he had been transacting in London; for the former hastily interrupted his assurance that all was amicably settled with Mr. Stephen, by exclaiming, "Ah well! well!—I have something of much greater consequence to talk about."

In some surprise and uneasiness Fitz Arthur followed his father into the room, and sitting down by him, inquired what it was he had to hear.

Sir Everard had now changed his mind; he would hear his son quite out, and then broach his own subject.

Fitz Arthur knew that Miss Clavering was coming to take possession of her newly acquired estates: and that as he was one of Mrs. Branspeth's executors, he would be thrown into perpetual business with her, or for her. He knew that for the sake of being near Aycliffe, she was coming to their neighbour's, Sir John Henderson, (his partner in the executorship,) where she and her second sister were to stay till Mrs. Clavering and the younger girls returned from Lisbon. She might be kept there by delay on her mother's part, for a month or more; he could not then escape going where she was, almost every day. Had his father any wish to utter connected with these circumstances?

Recollecting a former short conversation on the subject of this amiable heiress, he now found a cloud gathering over his spirits, while relating what otherwise he would have done with joyful cheerfulness, the satisfactory termination of his interviews with Mr. Stephen; and he yielded to the temptation of possibly preventing a painful call upon him, by adding,—“One circumstance which a happy chance brought before me, has given

me peculiar pleasure, since it is always a pleasure to do a fellow creature's character justice. I met with Mr. Stephen, the very man to whom it was said, that the gentleman you have heard Miss Clavering was to have married, lost two thousand pounds just before her father's arrival; and upon which, (the gentleman either being bound by a promise, or by a false notion of delicacy, refusing to explain while he solemnly denied the charge,) the match broke off. The money was actually lost by a Mr. Chesterfield, who had been attached to the other's sister; and Miss Clavering's lover having tracked him to this gaming-house, and come there solely to persuade him away, finding him in an agony of despair, without a sou to answer this last loss, gave the winner a draft on his banker for the amount: thus stripping himself of all he had left out of a relation's bequest some months before."

"A fine fellow!" exclaimed Sir Everard, to his son's surprise and great relief. "So you are going to tell this to Miss Clavering. Do you expect it will make her recall her spark?"

Fitz Arthur answered hesitatingly, for he doubted some extraordinary understanding between his father and the heiress, "I really cannot pretend—I—as one left in trust by Mrs. Branspeth, for her heiress, I ought not to promote a marriage she did not approve: yet as I think it was principally because she believed the young man a gamester, and a dissembler in consequence, my conscience would upbraid me if I did not put Miss Clavering in possession of this very important testimony in her former lover's favour. And I do assure you, dear sir, that I think in the main he deserves her,—and that if it were not for one circumstance, I should heartily desire to see her his wife."

Fitz Arthur pronounced the last decisive words with much fear of their effect upon the glow of his father's looks: what then were his mingled emotions of surprise, alarm, gratitude, regret, and final transport, when Sir Everard all at once burst forth into a disclosure of his conversation with Mrs. Shafto, (to whom, however, he

credulously gave credit for misinformation, and well-meant intention,) detailing his own deductions from it, his own after-observations upon Honoria, and his own proceedings about the pictures and the Cumberland property.

"And now, Delaval," he concluded, "you are entire master of Greyscote, and free to give it any mistress you choose. I long for a daughter to cheer my old age: and if it is not to be Miss O'Hara, if you like any other charming girl, name her. So I do but see you happy I don't much care where she comes from,—now I have managed so as you may afford to marry, without thinking of a fortune."

"Dear father!—dear sir!—O no, no!" Fitz Arthur hesitatingly exclaimed. "My heart has had no wishes except for your—at least I tried that it should not. It would be robbing my brothers;—it would be base in me to take advantage." He stopt, and buried his crimsoned face in his hands, ending these broken sentences by an agitated sigh.

"Don't stop short, Delaval," resumed Sir Everard, encouragingly. "Is it me or your fair mistress you are afraid of?"

"I fear both!" was his son's tremulous reply. "Her want of fortune, and your overpowering kindness, ought to steel me against this sharp temptation: and how do I know whether she cares enough for me?—What do I say? Such an angel cannot care for an every-day man like me! O no, no—it must not be thought of—keep your generous gift for your own comforts, dearest father, and let me continue only a sharer with my brothers of this beloved home."

Again Fitz Arthur buried his face in his hands, and sat in torturing conflict with himself:—thrilling at the bare possibility of being empowered to pour out his long-restrained feelings at the feet of Honoria, and agitated by the fear that such indulgence would even now be a sin against family bonds.

Sir Everard's purpose was, however, too steadfast to be thus shaken. He detailed his own expectations of

domestic tenderness and attention from such a daughter as Honoria was likely to prove ; insisted upon the advantages of such an affectionate watcher over Hylton's health and retired life ; and owning, that he could have wished his son had not followed the family fashion of fixing affection upon portionless beauty. pressed him so strongly to give his old father the joy of seeing him happy in the way which he himself had found the happiest in life, that Fitz Arthur actually relented into a confession of his long suffering love, together with its sad doubt of return, and its present dread of sinning by accepting gratification at the expense of his parent's future ease in circumstances.

Sir Everard showed much ingenuity in combating both his son's position concerning his future circumstances, and his notion of Miss O'Hara's indifference. The less Honoria seemed to like him more than as a friend, situated as she was, the more probable was it that she loved him dearer :—the more obviously she shunned him, the better proof did she give of her abhorrence of mercenary views, and her delicate dread of being suspected of them.

Sir Everard could remember twenty little incidents which had not struck him at the time, but which he now marshalled in good order, as a body of evidence in favour of his assertion, that she was heartily attached to his son, from his own merits. She had been four or five times to Arthur's Court since Delaval's absence, although part of the month she had been confined to the house nursing her uncle, and she had always asked after him with particular interest : and the Baronet recollected that when she heard his son was left in trust for Miss Clavering, she had asked several questions respecting that young lady, which proved her to be flatteringly uneasy about her. Hylton too, after being let into his father's secret, had borne his raptured testimony to Miss O'Hara's great pleasure in hearing him talk of his dear Delaval. Nay, Hylton recollected her praising his brother's figure as they were looking at him from the window, managing a fiery horse. In short,

the result was, that even the modest Fitz Arthur, though as much in love as man could be, therefore as laudably and absurdly inclined to doubt the lady, and disparage himself, as your true lovers ever are, was finally brought to credit a little of what others, he was told, firmly believed in its full extent.

Nothing appears so much to convince every description of man, of a woman's preference for him, as her involuntary admiration of his person. Why this should be the case, the wiser sex must explain; for with women it is exactly the reverse. they may like the tinkling of flattery on their beauty, but they rarely believe in professed attachment, unless their manners and dispositions are avowed to be its object.

Delaval Fitz Arthur was evidently as weak upon this point as any of his multitudinous brethren; and the moment he heard, (though with deep confusion,) that Honoria animatedly pronounced him graceful, hope dawned in his breast.

Having now entirely satisfied himself that such a daughter would brighten the declining years of his father, and benefit those of his young brothers; such a wife indemnify him for the sacrifice of prouder views and more powerful connexions, he gratefully, tremblingly almost, acquiesced in the felicity thus unexpectedly offered to him.

How the proposal was to be made, and to whom, was the next consideration. Sir Everard had a notion that it would come with more effect from him, as more flattering to Miss O'Hara, and that consequently he had better go the next day and make it in person to Mr. Meredith, when his niece would be at the officers' races, and no interruption need be dreaded.

Delaval was not quite sure this would be the best course. He had been a whole month away; Miss O'Hara might in that time have seen some other person she could prefer. He distrusted his own power over her even yet. Perhaps it would be better to go the next day to this gay scene, where he would be certain of seeing her, and discovering from her manner of wel-

coming him back, whether any stronger impression had been made by another man on her heart. If a favourable opening were given him there, then he might hazard the avowal himself;—if not, after consideration would settle whether it were to be made at all, and how.

To this arrangement Sir Everard contentedly yielded, yet so amiably anxious was he for crowning what he believed the mutual attachment of Honoria and Delaval, that, had he not known by a note from the former to Hylton, that she was then at St. Cuthberts for some days, he would certainly have ordered out his coach, and gone off at the instant to the Rectory, for the sake of sooner bringing his son into her presence. As it was, he contented himself with accompanying his agitated Delaval to Hylton's apartment, whither he hurried now, to make that interesting boy a sharer in his hopes and wishes.

They found Mrs. Fothergill taking shelter in the sanctuary of an invalid's room, from persecution, though not pain;—for she was suffering from a dozen bruises, and a sprained ankle, got by falling over a trunk, which Master Thomas had placed in the passage to her room, ere he set off all the alarm bells, and called "Fire!" in the middle of the preceding night.

Thomas was now said to be in DISGRACE, for an act which might have endangered the life of Hylton, had not the latter guessed the trick, from the voice making the outcry; and he was now formally banished from all the inhabited apartments by his ill-judging father. An injury for which he was *manfully* indemnifying himself, by roaming over every other chamber, making the most hideous noises, and doing all the mischief possible. That night, the maids predicted, no bed would escape a strewing of cowage, except only those of his father and brother.

Poor Hylton's meek cheek showed, by a hectic spot, that his head was splitting with these dissonant sounds; Mrs. Fothergill, deaf as she was, demonstrated by different movements of her face, that she heard Thomas only too well. She sat in a sunny nook, busily knitting a

stocking for that unfortunate member of her body, which now found support on a high cushion; and after the first pleased recognition of her best friend, Delaval, pursued her work at too great a distance from the others to catch a word of their conversation.

Bright was the joyous sparkle of Hylton's eyes as he welcomed his brother back, and half rose to his folding arms! Every impulse of that chastened spirit was a pious one; and "Thank God!" was uttered before he breathed the name of Delaval, to himself. The affectionate elder brother remarked upon his better looks, questioned him of his health, his amusements, his employments during his long absence; and gave him, in return, answers to all his inquiries concerning London concerns.

At length, the last and dearest subject was entered upon; and Fitz Arthur's confidence was more than repaid; not merely by the gentle boy's tearful sensibility to their general interest in the character of Honoria, but by his repetition of many a word and action of hers, calculated to inspire confidence in her preference.

Although Fitz Arthur's hopes even now began to faint, from his previous habit of despondency on the same subject, he was cautious not to give utterance to the fear again;—since he had discovered, that an idea of Miss O'Hara's possible indifference to him, was the only thing Sir Everard could not bear with temper:—that, in short, if she were to avow such indifference, his father would at once credit all that had been repeated to him by Mrs. Shafto.

As Fitz Arthur looked alternately from the elated countenance of his single-hearted father, to the more tenderly touched one of Hylton; his whole soul seemed to overflow with grateful affection. By what a sacrifice that honoured parent had purchased the means of thus seeking happiness for him! Yet, if it should prove of no avail,—if Honoria should refuse his hand,—the pictures, endeared by association with a dear wife's memory, would have been parted with, for no good. Here Fitz Arthur checked himself. By the sale of

them, Sir Everard had cleared one estate ; an effort he would not have made without such an aim in view. Thus, end as Delaval's fond hopes might, that solid advantage would abide. As mere objects of taste, exquisite as the Raphael's were, he would cheerfully have exchanged them for freedom from debt and reproach ; and even as memorials of his mother's sway over her husband's affections, he was ready to applaud the sacrifice. In Fitz Arthur's opinion, the very glories of the material world itself were dust in the balance, when compared with self-accusation in an honest man's breast.

As he imagined, in spite of rising apprehension, the felicity of dwelling under the same roof with his father after his marriage—for he resolved never to make another home to himself,—many a sweet vision floated before him ;—and he would soon have forgotten in these every thing really around him, had it not been for his little brother's persevering noises.

Nothing could be less in harmony with a lover's reveries than the whooping and hallooing of the urchin, Thomas ; who now came with an insolent bounce against the door with his fist, by way of vengeance for the exile of his person.

"Ay ! there you see !" exclaimed Sir Everard reluctantly, "harsh measures will do no good, Delaval. It is of no use sending that poor boy to Coventry, as I have done, all day, just for frightening Mrs. Fothergill last night ; so you had better let him in to see you."

"I think so too, dear sir !" returned Fitz Arthur, going to obey, yet resting his hand on the lock : "but since you have sentenced him to Coventry, let his return be a favour granted to me."

Sir Everard nodded assent, and Thomas was admitted. Dirt and daringness were never better blended on any face of eleven years' growth than in Master Thomas's. He stood bolt upright, in a suit of new clothes, torn half off his back ; with locks bolt upright ; and as if scorning to enter where till now he had been shut out.

Hylton's kind voice and stretched out hand welcomed

him in. Fitz Arthur took his lumpish fist, for the boy kept it fast closed. "Well, Thomas, I am glad to see you!—grown taller by an inch, I think, than when I went for you at Christmas." (Thomas mumbled sulki-ly.) "You and I must rout out the target and arrows, that have had a sinecure these last eight years; and play cricket together, and ride together. I know you'll consent to be my companion, in return for my begging you out of disgrace just now."

Thomas stared and reddened, partly from pleased surprise, partly from good shame, and bad shame. Yet he stuck closely to the doctrine of his own merits; beginning a vehement defence of himself, and accusation of Mrs. Fothergill, for not knowing how to take a joke.

"A sprained ankle is no joke, you will allow," observed his brother, with determined forbearance; "*at least* it is a jest which I hope nobody will choose to make you the subject of at present, otherwise I shall lose my playfellow. Come, dear boy, we will all shake hands with you now, in full confidence that you will leave off these childish tricks. To-morrow you shall have an opportunity of showing how much you can behave like a man; for you shall have the pony, and ride with me to see the races on the Fell. From to-morrow, therefore, I shall expect you will amuse yourself with men's sports as I do, and then go to something better."

Thomas gave a most unmanly yell of joy, while fervently protesting he would from that moment turn over a new leaf, and be a match for his elder brother at any thing he pleased; only begging that he was not to have his brains cracked all day with Greek and Latin, and catechisms, as he saw Hylton doing.

"You may come and help me at a pleasanter duty, then, just now;" observed Hylton sweetly; "Abbot says the May-children are at their dinner, and we shall just be in time to help their pudding."

This was a rural feast regularly given by Sir Everard to gratify his invalid son, whose retired life rendered

home amusements desirable, and whose benevolent disposition made amusement sweeter, when it pleased those who like himself had few pleasures.

It was Hylton's custom to be carried into the hall, when the children dined, that he might see them eat, and hear their blameless conversation ; more than indifferent himself to the delicacies which bad health interdicted, he yet delighted in seeing others temperately relish them, especially the offspring of the poor. The office of dispensing the tarts and creams, fruit and cakes, of which this pastoral feast consisted, was to him one of positive enjoyment ; a glass of sweet wine drank by each little guest to the health of Sir Everard, was, on that day only, drank also by Hylton ; after which a piece of silver was given to each, and the party broke up.

Delaval Fitz Arthur had not witnessed a May-day at his own home for nearly eight years ; for though he was returned the last May-day, he happened to be absent from Arthur's Court. He now stood by the crowded table, where Hylton and Thomas were presiding among a set of happy little faces, with a heart full of remembrances.

At this table, among just such faces, how often had he and his brother Hedworth sat, the little gods of the feast !—How well he remembered the joyous face of his brother, his cheerful young voice, the free hand with which he dealt out the piled cheesecakes which it was his province to help ! How well he remembered, too, the soft step of their kind second mother, lingering and smiling round the buzzing circle ! That mother, that brother,—where were they ?—and he was still in the cheerful sun, warm with life, and hope, and happiness !

Fitz Arthur turned from the plenteous board with a stifled sigh ; unwilling to let his father read any thing on his brow which might cloud the artless joy of his, and resolutely denying himself the indulgence of vain regret, at a moment in which every throb of his heart ought to be gratitude.

How he managed to get through the many hours intervening between that time and those of the next day, when he was to see Honoria, it is vain to conjecture : but live through them he certainly did ;—though I will not affirm that he was ever calm enough to sleep a single instant during the night : that night on which Honoria had retired to her rest, with a fancy full of Lord Francis Fitz James !

CHAPTER XIV.

“WHAT a day for these races !”—“What a day for rambling about !” severally exclaimed Jane Mulcaster, and Honor O'Hara, as they entered the morning drawing-room in St. Cuthberts, at the same moment, by different doors.

Jane was just come from the green-house, where her admiring lover had been giving a tasteful finish to her dress, by selecting a single rose for her bouquet ; and Honoria issued from the toilets of Sophia and Henrietta ; her own having yet to commence.

Honoria looked out on the chesnut groves, already promising their beautiful flowers ; and then up at the shining clouds floating over the blue sky. “A year ago, such a day as this, I should have been roaming away by myself, in the Fitz Arthur woods,” she exclaimed. “Heigho ! for those times of dear savage liberty, when nobody knew me, and nobody cared for me out of Edensfell village ; so nobody minded where I went, or how I went. But now I must not go any where *by myself*, for fear of being met, and thought very strange,—very improper !”

“And do you wish no one should care for you out of Edensfell ?” asked Jane Mulcaster, with affectionate reproach.

Honorina's answer was a half-laughing kiss of tearful sensibility. Her heart was always open to tenderness, even when her spirits were highest. All awakened now to gayety, and seeing William Mulcaster pacing the room, with wreathed arms, as if in serious thought, she softly repeated,—

“ ‘ Stately stept he east the ha’
And stately stept he west !’

“ Pray, Mr. Mulcaster, may I crave your royal leave to wear pink ribands to-day, for none other become me? Henrietta tells me you have taken such an aversion to the flower itself, that you mean to strike even *couleur de rose* out of the list of colours for ever.”

“ Pshaw,” cried William, between smiling and frowning. Lady Catherine had formerly ever matched the rose in his button-hole, by one in her fair bosom. Jane now hastily turned her back, putting her hand over Stanhope's late offering, as if to shield it from destruction.

“ No edict to the contrary ?” questioned Honorina, “ then to bright rose ribands, do I render up myself ;” and away she flew with gay hilarity ; smiling at the image of William in days past, with a bunch of fruit and leaves from a cherry-tree, flourishing in his waistcoat breast, because Lady Catherine's caprice had willed them there.

Honorina's toilet was soon made. A gown and wrapping cloak of transparent muslin, and a large gipsy hat of lighter materials, tied down with a rose-coloured handkerchief, formed the basis of her dress ; its only decorations were some knots of the same coloured riband, glowing among the dark curls of her hair, as grape-clusters through vine-leaves.

This hooded cloak, flying picturesquely back, and displaying her figure ; the careless grace with which she wore her becoming hat ; the hat itself, and the darkly bright face looking out from its shadow, with all its panoply of glittering smiles, laughing eye-beams,

and glows of colour, were too characteristic not to strike every one as she entered.

"My Honor! you are perfect!" exclaimed the warm-hearted Jane.

"Not amiss, for one of your inconsequent sex!" observed William, glancing at the lovely gipsy, with an attempt at no admiration.

Major Stanhope's remark was conveyed in a whisper to the beloved of his heart! Whatever that was, it called the rosy blood to the cheek of his fair mistress, who calling him flatterer, betook herself to fresh raptures about her friend.

Honoria was obliged to cry for quarter, or beg, that admiration might be transferred from herself, to her taste exercised upon others; for at that moment came in Miss Mulcaster, dressed with fashion, yet simplicity;—in stole Henrietta, like a Pastora;—in fluttered Sophy, with feathers flying, frills floating, colours blending. Honoria, while presiding at Sophia Mulcaster's toilet, had given her dress the only laws its wearer could endure; and had happily contrived to combine the young lady's plaid silk spencer, with an Amazonian head-dress then in vogue, so as to produce something of a military effect. Any lady who wishes to know the precise nature of the various head-gears then worn, may enlighten herself by consulting the prints in her aunt's pocketbook for the year 1797. She will there find that "Valenciennes helmets, telegraph bonnets, and gipsies' hats," were all the mode.

William lifted up his hands and eyes at Sophia's entrance.—"Match that girl for address!—(I don't mean a pun, Stanhope, so you may save your laugh)—tartan ribands, that every fool may find his favourite colour among them; and a helmet, with green feathers, by way of complimenting the whole 150th regiment! Then there's demure Henny, pretending the clerical already, determined that her saint of Trinity shall only hear of her in pastoral straw and primroses. Isabella, too, walking under clouds of lace and lawn, like the

moon in a mist, because—(he hesitated and glanced archly)—because she loves hiding."

Miss Mulcaster was seen to blush and look distressed, while *endeavouring to discover* that she could not throw back her long veil.

"Your audacious criticism can have nothing to say against the gipsies," questioned Stanhope, looking admirably, though involuntarily, towards Jane, who was dressed much in Honoria's fashion.

"O, nothing to signify," was William's careless answer; "except that the one mars the other. When Jane is going through the wind in your tandem, with her hair well blown out, and her hat well blown off, and her extravagant colour well blown in," (Stanhope's indignant clamours against such heresy in vain broke upon William's *tirade*,—he went on as if no one had spoken;) "why, then, she may look handsome enough in the whirl by, as a mere masquerader; but your real gipsy must be looked for in Miss O'Hara. Now, pr'ythee, Stanhope, be not so very silly and sentimental, as to keep thinking Jane is an angel, therefore, worth all the Egyptian tribe put together!"

"You have no business with my thoughts, Mulcaster," returned Stanhope, with his old laugh at William's exact guess. "After all, Miss O'Hara is only our *beau ideal* of a gipsy."

"Bravo, Major! a compliment *exquis*!—as good as if I had said it myself.—You really deserve something better than a wife with red hair!"

"Red hair!" repeated Jane in a panic. "Red hair!" echoed every other person.

"Why, you all know," he resumed composedly, "that Mrs. Shafto would go to death upon the assertion. For my own poor part, I do think her locks just now in the sun look awfully suspicious. Of course, Stanhope, you are ready to outswear Mrs. Shafto, and tell us, such locks

'Are from the golden mines on high,
Up in the blue hills of the sky:—'

that they are like woods in autumn, stained glass at sunset, nuts just ripened, &c. &c. &c. You see I don't consort with poets for nothing. But, to return to my subject.—My opinion upon hair is decisive,—for I study differences no other mortal takes the pains to observe; for instance—I declare Miss O'Hara's hair is of a different blackness from that of the Ladies Lumley; theirs is coal black—jet black—shadeless—grim—dreadful! Hers has a sort of blue bloom with its gloss, like my raven's feathers; a kind of prismatic—”

“O, Mr. Mulcaster, if you tell me I have a black and blue head, what a monster do you make of me!” interrupted Honoria.

Further lively nonsense was broken off by the appearance of the Dean. He came to say that both the carriage and himself were ready.

“You going, papa!” “You going, dear sir!” was repeated by every voice with tones of pleasure and surprise. Yes, he was actually going. He concluded that the officers would only have their own immediate acquaintance and neighbours at their breakfast; it would be a social little meeting, not a field of public gambling;—Colonel Mason had pressed for his company; and he thought now, that as Jane was situated, he ought to appear with her at the first large assembly she went into, after her engagement with Major Stanhope was openly proclaimed.

Some alteration of previous arrangements followed this otherwise acceptable proposal. Jane was to go with her father, instead of her lover, to the ground; but, if her heart were quite set upon having her lover break her neck, instead of her heart, her father would give her leave to be entreated afterwards into leaving the stand, and taking a drive with him round the course. Sophia gladly exchanged her place in a close coach, for Jane's vacant one beside the disappointed Major.

This change of plan was, in fact, too flattering, as well as proper, not to be submitted to with a tolerably good grace; and Stanhope, anxious to set his fair be-

trothed an amiable example of obedience, acquiesced immediately ; though a speaking glance at Jane told her what the virtue cost him.

Plans and places thus adjusted, away the party drove to the Fell.

As they bowled over the grassy cross road leading to the scene of action, they could see the tents and colours glittering on the high ground of the race-course ; crowds of pedestrians and horsemen were gathering round the starting-post ; and carriages of different sorts coming swiftly in different directions. The lively strains of martial music were heard rousing the echoes of the hills, mixed with the shrill voice of a Punch, the rattles of jugglers and showmen, and all the other anomalous sounds of a miniature Epsom.

The Dean was consternated, and would fain have turned back ; but hands were clasped, and voices raised, and kisses rained upon his hands, by all the syrens in the coach with him ; so he was fairly obliged to proceed. William, riding by their side for a few minutes, was one of the most earnest persuaders. He now pointed to Mr. Chaplin's distant white house, perched on the hill, with its long flying ends of thin pilasters : " Behold where riches literally make wings to themselves ! " he exclaimed ; the next moment he drew away, to let a remarkably high phaeton pass. It was drawn by four spirited blood horses ; and driven, not by Lord Brinkbourn, as William at first fancied, from the showy appearance of the carriage itself, and the servants riding after it, but by a dandy of that day, evidently just out of his teens ; with a narrow-brimmed, steeple-crowned hat, just resting on the top of his cropped head, and a neckcloth swallowing all the lower part of his face up to his nose. William, in conscious manliness of look and dress, looked after the foolish coxcomb with a supercilious smile ; but other objects claimed his attention.

As the Dean's heavy coach rolled towards the barrier of the course (for the officers had fenced off a part of the Fell,) it was checked in its advance by

the stopping of two coroneted carriages just before them. At that moment William again rode up to the side of his father's coach; pulling in his horse with a hand answering to the sudden paleness of his cheek, he hurried out,—“Look your best, Jane,—out-bloom the other bride elect. I see the Hexham and Bowes liveries just before us. I don't think I *can* cut her, after all.” So saying, he gave the spur to his hunter, and with all the grace of a most elegant and perfectly made figure, (though no longer with an air at once gay and disdainful,) he galloped up to one of the splendid equipages.

His sister Jane looked out after him: “Poor dear William!” she cried, as after short observation, she drew in her head again, her eyes glistening: “I saw his hand shake as he laid it on the side of their carriage; he was as pale as death. I wonder how she looked! I could only see her fantastic heap of lilac feathers, for Lady Hexham's great head. If she did not die on the spot with shame, she deserves—”

“Hanging,” interrupted the Dean. “Thou shalt sit upon the bench, my child! Another Daniel! William shows himself so utterly undone, so incapable of enjoying any sort of pleasure, that of course Lady Catherine must see she is a monster of perfidy, for having prudently weighed the heir to a dukedom, with high character, though in a quizzical person, (is not that the right epithet?) against a mighty handsome boy of nineteen without rank or present estate; one moreover that had most likely never allowed the matter-of-fact word, marriage, a place in his love making. When her pretty Ladyship accepted Lord Brinkbourn, it is obvious she must have been quite unprepared for the sight of such a dismal wreck as my poor dismasted, and dismantled William now presents.”

“Now, dear papa!” supplicated Jane, “were you not running down Lady Catherine just now, to Miss O'Hara; why are you so inconsistent?”

“Because, my child,” returned the Dean with immediate seriousness, “I would by ridicule, now and

then, teach you and William to moderate your likings and dislikings; and when you are denouncing the conduct of another, teach you to think that some of the evil may originate in yourselves. I am still ready to censure Lady Catherine for a free coquetry which dishonours female delicacy; and for an unworthy dissimulation of her different wishes or prospects, at a time, when they must have been obvious to herself, and when a hint of them, or any retiring conduct on her part, would have warned my son not to proceed in his public and private attentions to her. She *might* have spared him a mortification; but I really cannot accuse her of murdering one wink of his sleep."

Jane was humbly and affectionately owning her sense of his justice when she caught the distant sound of her lover's voice, as he was replying in his embarrassed way to some congratulating friends.

"O that dear laugh!" she whispered to Honoria: "do you remember all my treasons against it when I first knew him? how I love it now!"

"I condole with you then, my child," resumed the Dean, whom no whisper escaped, "it is fast disappearing; by the time your Major has got rid of his modesty, (and your preference has made a wonderful change in his notion of himself,) the laugh will go."

What further the worthy dignitary would have said on this subject is lost to knowledge, for the carriage was now passing under a temporary arch, prettily decorated with laurels and military emblems. Colonel Mason, with gorget and teeth glittering, sat on horseback, bowing and welcoming the different parties as they passed.

William and Major Stanhope were at the foot of the stand to hand the ladies out of the coach, and take them up to Lady Henderson who was to be supposed their chaperon.

The raised complexion, and resolute look of the former, told the history of his transit past the Hexham landau. "Not a tear, Jane," he whispered to his favourite sister as he grasped her hand. "Not one penitent or humbled look!—nothing but heartless levity.

I was a fool,—a wretched fool!—wel'—it was her last triumph, I can tell her. Mark me to-day!—there—go your ways.”

Jane hastened to get between her father and lover, with whom she was to ascend the stand; while her brother assuming his ordinary tone, called out to Honoria, who was gayly skimming after them, “Stop, stop, Miss O'Hara; take my arm; Isabella will chaperon Henny; and Sophy, you see, has got her string of puppies already. There,—now all's right; move on.”

William was still wound up to the heroic; and he kept on, jesting gayly, as they slowly followed those before them up the wooden staircase.

“Jane does look lovely, does she not?” he asked, while his sister's blushing, beaming face was seen by snatches, as she turned with more than her usual animated eagerness of talk, alternately from her father to her lover; “and Stanhope is worth all the lords on the ground; I'm glad he's such a good-looking fellow.” Honoria guessed what other couple were in his thoughts. “And I beg you'll look your best, Miss O'Hara, for I mean to bestow your pretty little hand, in the dance at least, upon my friend Mr. Peter Gubbins; you know you never will like poor Fitz Arthur, so I am not doing mischief there; therefore look as pretty as your shoe, or wo betide you! I wonder if Lord Francis is up there—ten to one if he comes after all, spite of his raptures about you and the sheep; he is such a strange animal! However, I am positive you are his *fate*. Your sentimentalists always choose gay things like you, that put one ever in mind of sunshine and the butterfly.”

Honoria rallied him on his indifferent compliment; but her heart was beating with girlish anticipation of Lord Francis' introduction.

When they reached the door-way at the top of the stairs, it was for a while completely blocked up, so much company having been attracted from the neighbouring counties by the popularity of Colonel Mason and the races themselves. She heard, however, the

voice of Lady Haverford within, joyously greeting those of their party already on the platform, and saying numberless graceful nothings, with engaging earnestness.

In a few moments she was herself on the stand, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, though all in a glow and a tremor.

Lady Haverford sprang forward,—

“And Miss O'Hara!—dressed in summer clouds. What is your dress, my dear creature?—O that cloak! it's a thing to go wild about: I never saw any thing half so pretty! you are absolutely a vision in the sky. But that face!—unless one had just such a face to look out with, it would be quite useless to mount up there.”

Did Mrs. Shafto hear aright? Was Miss O'Hara on such terms with Lady Haverford, the charming Lady Haverford, the fashionable Lady Haverford, the first cousin of the first British statesman! Did Lady Haverford (fashion's own oracle) pronounce a large, hooded wrapping cloak, *without lace*, perfect in elegance! Mrs. Shafto looked in dismay at her daughters' scarf cloaks, of pea-green satin, trimmed with black lace a foot deep. Better could so devoted a mother brook the enthusiastic praise given to the odiously brilliant face, than this decisive approbation of a self-fancied garment. Mr. Mulcaster became absolutely radiant with exultation: in defiance of Honoria's confusion, he seconded Lady Haverford's raptures about the “little becoming tie of rose-colour, which just relieved the delightful plainness of the wrap;” doing it with much of the unction, though none of the skill of a connoisseur.

Quite confounded, by what appeared to her such public, therefore distressing encomium, Honoria flew in utter confusion to the Dean's vacant arm, beseeching him to shelter her from general raillery. But Lady Haverford was not allowed time to pursue the fugitive: she was reabsorbed on the instant, by the small constellation of *haut-ton*, out of which she had shot for a moment to utter a voluble chime of cordial greetings and congratulations to the party from St. Cuthberts.

Honoria's troubled vision now began to clear; and

she saw on the stand only the congregated stars of fashion just mentioned, (all belonging to the Hexham party,) Lady Henderson, Lord Wearmouth, the family from Shafto Place, and such of the officers as chose to do the honours of their little platform.

Her heart ceased its tumultuous beatings: she observed William Mulcaster pausing for an instant; then saw him dauntlessly advance into the Hexham circle. After graceful notice of all he knew there, he carelessly asked Lady Haverford where Lord Francis Fitz James was.

"On some primrose bank, I dare say, at Ravenshaw," returned the Viscountess, smiling, though interrupted in a tide of lively talk, "worshipping a certain little black slipper, the history of which you know. Lord Francis would not come within ear-shot of betting, for all Christendom; but he promised to come to the breakfast, after which I intend he shall dance—" "With her of the slipper, doubtless," replied William, drawing close up to the object of his strongest aversion.

"Good morning, Mrs. Shafto!—a glorious day!—are your fair offspring here? O, I see," (bowing round.) "Which of you ladies have lost a shoe?" looking down at their long spiked feet. All protested against having suffered such loss. "I'm sorry to hear that; for there has been a slipper lost, and found, which is likely to produce great revolutions—achieve wonderful victories!—The foot to which it belongs will most indubitably carry off a hand full of bays, I can tell you; not bay horses, Miss Shafto," (seeing that lady obliquely glancing at Mr. Tudor below, dismounting from a steed of that colour,) "poet's bays, I mean."

Mrs. Shafto put herself forward with her most insinuating aspect, as she saw Lady Haverford's eyes smilingly directed from her own party towards her and Mr. Mulcaster. Mrs. Shafto was merely on the most distant visiting terms with the haughty Hexham family; that is, she called at Hexham Castle, where she was never let in; and Lady Hexham returned the civility at

Shafto Place, where she never got out : poor Mrs. Shafto therefore was always cheated with paper currency instead of gold. She now brightened in the hope of attracting a little distinguishing notice from their goddess, Lady Haverford, with whom too, she was but on curtsying terms of acquaintance ; and looking most beseechingly in her direction, she entreated Mr. Mulcaster would enlighten her on the affair of the slipper.

Her gay Ladyship was just then breaking away from one of her detainers ; and urged by William, incited too by her own enjoyment of animated narration, with all the ease of birth and beauty, gave the little tale of Lord Francis Fitz James's sight of Honoria, and subsequent prize of her slipper ; adding to it a more confident assertion of his heart's instant surrender to " the very prettiest of small feet " than even William would have hazarded.

No sooner was this done, than at some familiar voice, she flew to the front of the stand, below which half a dozen tilted equestrians were insisting upon her betting gloves with them.

Mrs. Shafto had listened to this detail with well-acted pleasure ; since amused she knew she ought to be : but a lord in waiting, with a blister upon his back, is lying on roses, in comparison. The ruthless William increased her secret torments, by adding that his friend Mr. Peter Gubbins would be at the *déjeûné* after the race, when he would try hard to present him to her. Mrs. Shafto was obliged beyond measure : she writhed and repeated various laudatory remarks upon his friend's poems, which her daughters had not made that very morning ; owning herself, however, (with masterly regard to former unlucky observations,) still a plain prose woman, though sure to like any friend of Mr. Mulcaster's.

Fully bent upon ingratiating herself, she chose the mode of compliment and condolence, and said flatteringly, " We heard yesterday of a marriage in prospect, which I hope we may congratulate you upon, for your very charming sister, Miss Jane ? "

"Thank you! thank you, Mrs. Shafto; getting a sister off, as they call it, is a great achievement these anti-marrying days. -I shall be truly glad when I can return the compliment for one of your five fair daughters." This was indeed too inhuman, and well deserved Mrs. Shafto's master stroke in reply.

"I heard of another alliance too," she added, feigning to lower her voice,—“so brilliant, and so suitable! —I should really be delighted at its taking place, were I not really sorry for a gentleman said to be—” William broke in upon her pity with an under tone. “That is being far too tenderhearted, my good madam, I'll take upon me to say. I am for all young ladies taking the first great catch that offers: if they want to be married, they need make no ceremony of jilting boys, or younger brothers. Those sort of animals themselves, think of nothing but living from day to day on a flirtation. A man must be a thorough steady goer indeed, before he puts the yoke round his own neck, and runs his head into matrimony.”

“That shot told wickedly two ways,” whispered Major Stanhope, as he was passing, on some embassy of Jane's. William meant it should; and leaving *the Shafto*, he went up again to Lady Hexham, with a well-studied, well-spoken compliment, upon the rank and character of her future son-in-law.

Lady Catherine's disturbed complexion and extravagant peals of laughter, while uttering the stupidest common-places to one of her companions, proved that his answer to Mrs. Shafto had reached her ear; she was evidently bitterly mortified, for she avoided his eye, and kept tearing a large bouquet to pieces, with obvious irritation.

The relentless William, much to his father's amusement, stood calmly among the set, alternately addressing Lady Hexham and Lord Brinkbourn with that perfect air of the gentleman, which he could wear at will.

“That boy of mine will not be ill-flavoured when time has mellowed him a little;” observed the Dean to Honoria: “at present, he is what your beer-drink-

ers would call *hard*, and *heady* : but I think it is only real malignity that he hates so intemperately ; offended self has not very much to do with it."

Honorina heartily assented to the partial parent's remark ; for she hourly liked her friend's brother more and more. Yet she could not forbear accusing him of purposely bringing his grace of person and glow of complexion into comparison with the rueful wanness of Lord Brinkbourn's long compressed shape, and the extraordinary uncouthness of his embarrassed movements. And when after a long stay among those people, he returned to his own party, she whispered a censure upon his merciless resentment.

"Well ! it is quite done now," he replied, in the same under tone, and with much good feeling. "I have seen for myself :—I am quite and completely cured. If there had been but the shadow of a worthy feeling in her face,—I'll put aside a tender one,—I could not have stood it : but now I know it must have been all her own doing,—her own free choice—and much good may do her with her pasteboard husband !"—"Now, Lady Haverford," he exclaimed aloud, "whose horse do you patronize ? Will you bet against me ? I'll take any side you choose to say won't win,—provided you'll let the stake be hands, not gloves."

Lady Haverford *went off*, as she called it, in fits of laughter at this free sally : every other person smiled ; and Mrs. Shafto began to think the very ground was slipping from under her feet, for Lady Catherine had jilted Mr. Mulcaster, and Mr. Mulcaster was unconcernedly flirting with Lady Haverford.

At this moment Colonel Mason rode up to the stand with the air of a Life Guardsman about to station himself under the arch of the Horse Guards.

"In a few minutes the horses will be off!"

At this important intelligence all was bustle. The Marquis of Brinkbourn's phaeton waited for Lady Catherine ; Major Stanhope's tandem for Jane Mulcaster ; William lamented to the Misses Shafto that he

had not a pillion in his pocket, that he might do the office of a knight, and succour beauty in distress.

Lady Haverford was swept away in the stream, ineffectually attempting to reach Honoria: five or six young ladies were in her train, each of whom she had good-naturedly proposed to drive in Lord Wearmouth's curricule: not one of them, after all, had the luck to get taken by her.

As the volatile Viscountess was descending the stairs, Sir Everard Fitz Arthur was just alighting from his chariot:—he was in the middle of as circumstantial an apology to one of the subalterns for Mrs. Fothergill's nonappearance, as though he believed the youth's happiness depended upon the smiles of his crippled relative; when her lively ladyship uttering a scream of pleasure, reminded him that they had not met during eight years, and insisted upon his letting her have the delight of driving him round the course, and hearing all about her old friend, his son Delaval, whom she was dying to see.

Sir Everard could not resist any request asked in his son's name. Hardly aware of what he was doing, he yielded to her quick impulse, and to the quicker action of her inviting hand, he got into the curricule, whilst assuring her his son Delaval was coming with Thomas to see the sport.

All elate with real pleasure, away Lady Haverford whirled, calling out with sudden penitence, as she looked back on the six young ladies, with each her attendant officer, "You poor girls! I quite forgot you all!"

The six deserted ones, among whom were two of the Misses Mulcaster, returned to the platform. Other parties were then ascending, among which Honoria beheld Delaval Fitz Arthur. He had encountered Mr. Mulcaster, who being close by Lord Brinkbourn's phaeton, had told him in an audible whisper that he would find his sisters and Miss O'Hara in the stand, looking like so many angels.

Fitz Arthur in his present state of mind, and after such an absence, could not deny himself the poor gra-

tification of just looking at Honoria—just exchanging a word with her ere he accompanied his little brother to the starting post. But no sooner had he caught a glimpse of her bright face, than he decided that it would be much safer for Thomas to see the horses run from their present station, than to ride his pony through the throng and press of horsemen near the rival candidates. Placing Thomas, therefore, as advantageously as possible, he hurried through the buzzing crowd toward Honoria.

The animation of his entrance struck her powerfully: she could not help thinking he was really handsome, after all her obstinate resolves to think him otherwise. Her dark eyes immediately lighted up with welcome, while half-extending her hand: but instantly remembering her vicinity to Mrs. Shafto, she checked herself, and merely made way for him to press in, by her side.

Fitz Arthur was even more gratified by the impulse being checked, than by the evident impulse itself: it seemed to argue a certain consciousness. There was embarrassment for the moment on her cheek and in her eye: it emboldened him to take that yet seizable hand, and tremblingly to press it, with an expression which he had never before ventured to give to any former pressure of that soft, warm hand.

Honoria let the change pass unobserved. She was so glad to see him again! he knew so well how he stood in her opinion!—she had such a thorough esteem, regard, gratitude, friendship, for him! he had been so long away! it would be absolute prudery to draw back, merely because he had given her hand too cordial a squeeze! and then she had so much to tell him!—for was she not in the habit of telling Fitz Arthur every thing that pained, pleased, or puzzled her?

Well did common phrases term friendship the cordial of life:—it was certainly no bad substitute for the intoxicating draught of love. That enchanted cup, however, she had not yet tasted, she was well convinced.

If she fancied it might be held to her lips hereafter by Lord Francis Fitz James, it cannot be doubted that the fancy was not displeasing. Yet was there something at the bottom of Honoria's heart which she was afraid to fathom ; it seemed to say, she felt more inclined for the proud triumph of having Lord Francis Fitz James to refuse, than for the gentle wish of loving him in return. She would have attributed this guilty feeling to sheer, pitiful vanity, had not the jaundiced eyes of Mrs. Shafto looked remarks and roused emotions, which declared pride and self-estimation to be Honoria's besetting sins.

As she recalled all that Mr. Mulcaster had told her of Lord Francis's avowed admiration of her, and as she indignantly remembered the many insults of Mrs. Shafto on the subject of Fitz Arthur, future victory rose to her view : she then suffered her spirits to take their freest course.

She had to tell Fitz Arthur of her visit to Ravenshaw ; of her new acquaintance Lady Haverford ; and as she had long ceased to make a secret to him of her little chagrins from the disagreement of her present home with her natural tastes and earlier habits, she described the first appearance of Lord Wearmouth at the Rectory, with its ridiculous distress to herself, in her gayest manner.

The charm, the playfulness of Honoria's countenance whenever she narrated any thing amusing, was inexpressibly delightful. She delivered herself so entirely up to her subject ; was so bewitchingly careless of her own effect meanwhile, that she enchanted, as children do, absolutely without consciousness of doing so. Afterwards, indeed, she woke up to the effect she had produced ; and sometimes regretted it.

Now, as if to welcome her friend back, she was all animation ; she would hear all that had occurred to him while absent ; and Fitz Arthur contrived to find some incidents to tell that were in harmony with her humour and a race-course. Admiration and compliment now buzzed about Honoria, and she heard them not. Many a young horseman's eyes below, lost the sight of the

race, by gazing up at her bright and bewildering countenance. Many a bet was taken and offered unwittingly, from the better's ear being fascinated by the varied music of her voice. She smiled, and trifled, and made herself only too enchanting to him who sat drinking in every word she uttered, without suffering her extravagant gayety to be frowned down by Mrs. Shafto's ejaculations of, "What a sad noise ! my poor head ! how people talk !"

Honoraria was culpably eager to show Mrs. Shafto that she held the sceptre of Delaval Fitz Arthur's heart : that point it was now necessary should be made manifest, since Mrs. Shafto doubted it ; after which, Honoraria would have the decided triumph of withdrawing from his attentions. She forgot that Fitz Arthur would thus have a right to reproach her for encouraging the display of his affection, and then rejecting it ; she forgot that she was at this moment awakening hopes, or rather turning hopes into expectations, which she never intended to realize. Alas, Honoraria was but eighteen ; and she lived with a most active heart in bosom solitude ; averse to making little confidences, (which so often enlighten us upon our own inclinations and failings,) and having no discerning mother's eye to watch over her erring feelings and weed them out as they sprang up.

Fitz Arthur, listened to, questioned, talked to with apparent interest, detaining Honoraria's attention from the very object of her coming there, (for she never once looked towards the running horses,) grew giddy with hope, and but for the closeness and numbers of the thronging heads around them, must have given breath to his agitated transport.

As it was, his hitherto smothered passion burnt not only on his cheek and in his eyes, but in the touch of his hand, as Honoraria's thrillingly rested in his, while he assisted her to move over a bench into a freer space ; he was at that moment ardently expressing something like envy of Major Stanhope's happiness,—so loving ! so beloved ! Honoraria, trembling to the contradictory

glow and shiver of the hand assisting her, felt panic-struck,—conscience-struck.

Would it not be barbarous to mislead him, as perhaps she was doing?—but how very agreeable and interesting he had been, that half hour! yet that should not excuse her to herself, for remaining near him. With laudable resolution, therefore, she all at once declared she was tired of staring about.

Fitz Arthur fondly hoped it was Mrs. Shafto's petrific eye, which had caused this hasty movement; the embarrassed air of Honoria strengthened the flattering idea, for she had blushed as she met his ardent gaze. At that instant he would not have exchanged situations with the happiest lover on the ground.

He now saw her flit to the side of Miss Mulcaster, who was talking with Lord Wearmouth. As His Lordship immediately addressed her as an acquaintance, Mrs. Shafto actually turning green with vexation, called to Fitz Arthur, and in a low tone begged "he would tell her, (she supposed he was in the secret,) how it came about that Miss O'Hara knew Lord Wearmouth, and knew Lady Haverford? Certainly some persons had a most extraordinary knack of pushing themselves into society where they had no pretensions to come! She only hoped Lady Haverford and Lord Francis Fitz James had not laid a plot of diverting themselves by seeing how much of a poor young woman's head they could turn, by their caricatured admiration."

Fitz Arthur in alarm, questioned what Mrs. Shafto meant; for the half-conscious Honoria had not spoken of Lord Francis. A garbled explanation followed. Mrs. Shafto retailed as much as she liked, and in the way she liked, of what Lady Haverford had narrated: intending to convince Fitz Arthur that he was degradingly devoting himself to a girl, either foolishly vain, or cunningly ambitious. But as Mrs. Shafto understood that Honoria had not yet been in society with the worshipper of her slipper, Fitz Arthur gathered that the admiration was solely on Lord Francis's side; and well did he remember that lady's pernicious insinuations

against the woman he loved, to his artless father. He was told that Honoria had heard this admiration repeated to her; that she now knew who Lord Francis was, (her champion of the shamrock,) he could not doubt; yet she had afterwards smiled upon her first admirer, more bewitchingly than she had ever hitherto done; and she had been talking with delicacy and feeling of Lady Catherine Eustace's cruel coquetry. She could not then be capable of playing with any heart from any motive.

An humbler man than Delaval Fitz Arthur, if such could be found, would have gathered sweet auguries from these considerations. They did indeed allay the sudden pang of apprehension; but fear had too painfully touched his hopes, for confidence to remain. He ventured not to seek her again; but replacing himself beside his little brother, continued standing with altered looks, near the party most unpleasant to him.

The last race was just over, and every body was now in movement for the breakfast. Fitz Arthur could not escape from offering to take charge of one of the Misses Shafto! (the eldest had unawares accepted the pompously presented arm of Mr. Tudor,) and marshalling according to the established laws of precedence, the different parties of nobility and commoners, descended from the stand, trooping to the gay marquées pitched for the collation and the dance.

By a gallant fancy of Colonel Mason's, the brides elect had one marquée appointed for themselves and their especial friends. He was now seen, hat in hand, going from Lady Catherine in the phaeton, to Jane Mulcaster in the tandem, imparting this gallant arrangement, and beseeching them to issue their commands on the subject of invitation.

The enchanted Jane instantly named himself as the first of her party;—adding, “and *all* my friends.” Colonel Mason was left to ask who were *not* Jane Mulcaster's friends:—if grateful hearts among the poor towards her, and affectionate ones in those of her own rank, entitled persons to be so named.

Lady Catherine Eustace confined her party entirely to the select set who had grouped round her on the platform of the stand.

The second of May being the anniversary of a battle in which the 150th regiment had distinguished itself while in India, not only every officer and private had laurel in his cap or breast, but the tents were liberally adorned with it. That into which the chosen groups now entered, was turned into a bower, by a perfect lining of hot-house plants, ascending on stages to its very top, and forming a fragrant circle round its linen walls. Every delicacy to gratify appetite was profusely spread over the board. Round this, the hastily collected persons seated themselves, with the gay tumult of hurry and pleasure, common on such occasions. For some time little else was heard among the clattering of silver, and china, and military trappings, except challenges to drink wine, invitations to take ice, &c. &c. Honoria looked round to see who were in the tent, who were left out. There were neither the Shafto family, nor the Fitz Arthur's, nor William Mulcaster, nor Lady Haverford. Where was Lord Francis Fitz James? if he were indeed come, he must be in the large tent.

Honoria soon began to wonder (in spite of two attendant young officers waiting on her smiles,) when the people would have done eating and drinking. She wondered, too, how her friend Jane could bear to be so long in such a small tent, with such an overpowering smell of flowers and wine. But Jane was seated next to Stanhope, whose looks were full of more than a lover's pride; real, deep, true, devoted affection.—She was by his side, and where else would she be?

As Honoria's glance rested on her, she could not help thinking how inferior was the air of mere fashion, to that look of nobility which springs from truth and graciousness in the character. How far superior was the noble Jane, sitting in her glowing and plenteous beauty, with honour and honesty stamped upon her brow,—to the elegantly pretty Lady Catherine, evidently as mutable, cold, and empty, as the mists which her fan-

tastic, yet graceful movements, seemed intended to imitate !

Luckily, Lady Catherine was neither so happy, nor in such good-humour, as the other bride elect. Lord Brinkbourn was sitting close up by her ; looking, at times, like a man in a vice ; at other times, as if seized by a fit of St. Vitus's dance, breaking cups and glasses in his nervous attempts at helping the ladies round him.

Lady Catherine's rank privileged her in first making a movement to leave the table. She arose ; and every one rose after her ; preparing to flock to the larger tent.

William Mulcaster appeared at the entrance of the marquee, calling out that they had cleared away the tables in their dining-place, and were beginning dancing ; —that is, Lady Haverford, and Colonel Mason, were actually going to dance a minuet together.

At this intimation, every one hurried out, to witness an exhibition even then rarely seen beyond St. James's. "Colonel Mason is the best sight on the ground," pursued William, as he strode along, dragging Honoria on his arm with brotherly familiarity. "He's like a man covered with orders ; every lady insisting upon his wearing her flower. - So he has a bouquet in every button-hole : - a laurel sprig at the top of the ladder though ! — If his pockets are but well crammed with ladies' fans, and smelling-bottles, and handkerchiefs, he'll make a grand appearance !"

They were by this time in the large tent, with the pair of popular exhibitors, and close to Miss Matilda Shafto, whom lucky chance had presented to Mr. Pemberton as a talking-stock.

A tongue that seldom could remain inactive, governed by a shrewd head, which allowed only rations of nonsense to young ladies, made Mr. Pemberton partial to listeners ; and Miss Matilda Shafto, prompted by a look from her mother, listened, with a wide fixed smile, to the frothy bon mots of the ministerial man, instead of enjoying the real comic of the sight before them. Mrs. Shafto instantly had some thoughts of detaining her from a visit she was going to make in Yorkshire.

With genuine taste for the ridiculous, Honoria having glimpsed Colonel Mason's figure, absurdly stuck over with flowers, as Mr. Mulcaster had described, insinuated herself into a front rank of the surrounding circle ; receiving, at the moment, a bewitching smile from Lady Haverford. Lady Haverford, all sportiveness and elegance, was going through her part of the performance with a freshness of vivacity absolutely bewitching ; evidently unconscious of her own inimitable grace, while considering the whole matter as a jest, played off to please her partner, and amuse her own set.

He, meanwhile, with the visage of a man solving a problem, and the air of a ramrod, was marching and counter-marching in stately solemnity ; sliding along and across, with eyes left, eyes right, obedient to the awful drilling of times long past, under the command of his *dieu de danse* ! Now bowing his powdered head, slowly and profoundly ; now rearing it, with gallant spriteness, in the very face of his fair antagonist.

Honoria was at once enchanted and entertained. Lady Haverford's gliding motion realized all her visions of an ærial being, and she warmly re-echoed Sir Everard Fitz Arthur's audible admiration, as he stood beside her, after a hasty recognition of more than usual cordiality.

In the press near them, were Lord Brinkbourn and his bride elect ; Mr. Mulcaster carelessly grouped with them. When the dance was over, she saw William turn negligently away, exclaiming, as his arm brushed Lady Catherine ; "I beg Your Ladyship ten thousand pardons ! I really did not see you." — William, — who had hitherto been supposed to see nothing but her ! — Lady Catherine obviously felt the sting of this apology, for she changed colour, and bit her lips : — yet she followed William's figure with her eyes.

When country dances were forming, the young man came up to his father. "What are you thinking of, sir ?" he asked cheerfully.

"I am thinking, William, what moral difference

there is between an asserted lie, and an acted lie. What do you think there is?"

"None at all, I should suppose!" was the instant answer.

"A pleasant opinion for you at present," returned the Dean dryly. "I wish you joy of the character you have just contrived to fasten upon yourself: that of the most hardened, heartless coxcomb, that ever forced poor lady into the arms of another man."

William comprehended his meaning, and could not forbear a glance of triumphant pleasure, as he sprang away, without further comment. He was caught in his flight by one of the officers, who looking towards Lady Catherine's mortified yet admiring countenance, said in a low tone, "If I'm not mistaken, you may have a capital revenge six months at furthest:—there's nothing like piquing a woman;—will you try for it?"

"Am I a demon?" William asked indignantly; then, with affected indifference: "Faith, I've no fancy for thorns in my nightcap." This was carelessly said, and neither of the speakers meant to be heard beyond themselves. But both questions and answers had reached the quick ear of the father; and his heart swelled with grateful acknowledgment to the God who had evidently blessed his pious endeavours at giving right principles to his son.

He now turned to meet his daughter Sophia, who was hastening with a disordered mien towards her sister and Honoria. Not a single red or blue coat was with her! All were swarming round the sparkling path of Lady Haverford, who was formed to dazzle and delight in crowded assemblies. Her exuberant spirits awakened by the whim of dancing an obsolete dance with a man old enough to be her father, were exerting themselves with that fascinating inattention to common forms, (yet with nice tact of what man's delicacy exacts from delicate woman,) which gives the highly-born, their mastery in the strife of charming.

Her musical laugh, for so it might almost be called, was perpetually heard, breaking in upon her own rapid

and amusing talk : as rallying her love of popularity with as much gayety as frankness, she was lamenting the impossibility of running off with Colonel Mason and Sir Everard Fitz Arthur at the same moment.

Sophia Mulcaster's raised complexion showed that her vulnerable point was touched. "I cry you mercy, Sophy !" said the Dean, affectedly lowering his voice, and looking significantly at her vexed countenance. "I took you for a Miss Shasto. Must I help you to hue and cry your lost men ! or will you accept of William and me?—We are creditable-looking persons enough ; and folks may not know we are your relations."

Sophia would have passed him with a petulant "sir—sir !" but her father fairly grasped her wrist, and turned her back into the circle.

"Recollect yourself, my child !" he said ; then after a few moments' pause : "I am going to slip out of this gay scene : do you choose to go with me, or to remain ?"

Sophia's eyes actually brimmed with tears ; but she staid where she was ; and did not sullenly refuse her hand to one of her faithless followers, when he came to solicit it for the first two dances.

As the sets were forming, Lady Haverford fitted to and fro with half the population of the tent after her, giving her little commissions to one, her smile to another : seeking choice partners for all the young ladies round ; and pledging her own hand, by way of bribe, irredeemably to more officers and squires than she could dance with during a week.

Even Honoria was made to feel the potency of rank and fashion, when unblazoned beauty contends with them. But such conviction only left a wholesome, not bitter lesson in her mind. She dwelt longer and less agreeably on the developed habits of the fascinating character before her : for Lady Haverford had more than once attempted to make good her threat of possessing herself entirely of Miss O'Hara's society, and

as often had been torn away by different calls upon her services and her notice.

Lady Haverford's obvious passion for popularity was far too kindly for vanity; yet it diminished Honoria's wish to know her more intimately. Lady Haverford, equally anxious to please every body, equally open to the solicitations or murmurs of friends and acquaintance, was not a being to wed the heart to. She was a luxuriant tree too crowded with blossoms ever to ripen into sound fruit: she was a summer wind bringing sweets and wafting them away,—a bright cloud in the blue sky, melting as the eye was ascertaining it! her hand grasped too much to retain anything: and Honoria turned from this fair phantom of charm and caressing, to the reality of genuine goodness, thoroughgoing affection, and efficient benevolence, in the person of Jane Mulcaster.

It is needless to say with what deep, true feeling, she inwardly pledged her own warm heart to that well-deserving friend: to that friend, who had come from crowds of admirers and superiors, to seek her in a hovel almost, for so Honoria thought disorder and discomfort rendered the Rectory: that friend, who now gave her all the looks and thoughts and words she could spare from her family, and the future partner of her life.

As Honoria's eyes unconsciously rested upon Jane with fulness of expression, till tears gathered on their sparkling lashes, she turned them away with a quick movement, which made her aware that other persons were studying her face meanwhile. Surprise, confusion, pleasure instantly suffused her cheeks; for Mr. Mulcaster, stepping forward, begged to present Lord Francis Fitz James.

Honoria blushed vermillion. Miss Shafto, who stood by, burnt blue:—"An absolute corpse candle," William muttered.

This was no common introduction our heroine felt; for Lord Francis, evidently interested by what his fancy had made out of her eyes' fixture upon the blooming and happy Jane, instead of addressing her with

any of that enthusiasm of admiration which Mr. Mulcaster had taught her to expect, (and which may dazzle, but rarely penetrates,) accosted her with that look of melancholy sweetness, and those silver tones, which so many women had found as dangerous as sweet.

"We have been impertinently guessing at thoughts, from looks, Miss O'Hara," said His Lordship, avoiding with well-bred delicacy the mention of their morning rencontre. "Mulcaster pretends to great skill in the art: however, in such eyes as he has been pronouncing upon, I venture to think reading is easy."

Honorina could not misunderstand the compliment, though she only noticed it by a deeper blush, and a more shaded eye:—for the fixed, yet pleadingly soft gaze of the speaker, seemed prophetic of more than admiration.

"I'll tell you what your face was saying," resumed William, intending to give his companion full time to gaze himself into a desperate passion: "as you looked after Lady Haverford, you said to yourself 'a bewitching creature verily; but no one need trouble themselves by giving her a whole heart—a slice will do;—the thinnest slice possible, so that it has but a large apparent surface?'"

"O, Mr. Mulcaster! was there only that odious expression in my face?"

"Indeed, indeed, there was a very different one there also!" repeated Lord Francis with energy. "Even Major Stanhope must have been satisfied with the *heart-look* resting on his destined wife."

Lord Francis suffocated more than one sigh as he ended; then hastily, and as if anxious to efface the energy of his last words, added: "Mulcaster, you must now present me to your sisters."

His Lordship was instantly introduced to Jane and Henrietta: but though he talked with grace and ease to them, Honorina for ever felt his eye upon her, and felt fancied that it expressed a willingness, nay, almost a wish, to gaze away his heart. Every person in, and near the party, made the same observation.

Once she caught him looking down at her foot ; he smiled as their glance encountered, and again she was covered with blushes. She was vexed at herself for a confusion which she was sure those around would misinterpret ! and conscious that her embarrassment would have ceased at first, had Lord Francis frankly reverted to their morning scene together, she was rather displeased with him for this distressing niceness : but His Lordship uttering a wringing sigh suspended her displeasure. William Mulcaster was as much startled at its sound as she herself ; he stooped to her ear ; "Poor Fitz James is thinking of his sister—he told me your figure was like hers." Honoria's bosom was all repentance and compassion. Calls to the dance now hurried away Stanhope and Jane, Henrietta and Captain Adair : Honoria, left cooped up between Lord Francis and Mr. Mulcaster, appeared to be engaged to one of them ; therefore, by a whimsical chance her hand remained unsought.

William enchanted with this, was what he called stirring the pretty Honor up, to charm his noble friend : and in a few minutes, conversation very unlike ball-room talk, gave to the fine countenance of Lord Francis, that air of inspiration which is often so provokingly bestowed by a very moderate light, shining through features of Grecian contour.

Honoria looked round for Delaval Fitz Arthur, almost mechanically. She was not aware that she had the habit of never enjoying anything, without wishing for his participation. But Fitz Arthur, returned from executing some commission of his father's about their carriage, was going down the dance with a sister of Lord Brinkbourn's, too solicitously watching the steps of his blundering brother Thomas, following with the gay Lady Haverford, to see even Honoria, much less her dreaded companion.

Fitz Arthur's back was to her and Lord Francis ; but as he moved on, she had occasional views of his face in profile. All the home virtues and affections were in the expression of that amiable countenance, while he

watched the dawning in his brother, of a better ambition than more serious instruction had succeeded in rousing. It was a countenance to love; but Honoria was at the same moment considering one, formed to become a model for a sculptor; and she didn't at the time, do its mere material graces justice.

"Lord Francis never dances:" William suddenly said, seeing a figure advancing, "but you'll dance with me, Miss O'Hara; and, as I dare say you are in no hurry to trip it, I'll go explore a little, and come back with a cargo of discoveries."

Honoria had not time to dissent, for stepping forward to intercept the expected intruder, William exclaimed, "Well, Mr. Tudor! when I saw you last, you were studying that complicated piece of mechanism, a lady's thimble—have you made one yet? Miss O'Hara is engaged to me; so don't think of poaching upon my manor. You may have *Shafto chase* all to yourself: that's fair! I scruple no heroic act for a friend."

Back bowed the conceited and gratified scholar; and away sauntered William with an affectation of more than his natural lightness of heart as he saw Lady Catherine Eustace's head turned towards him from the dance.

Honoria was now in a manner left alone with Lord Francis Fitz James. In her present state of mind the situation was embarrassing, especially as she observed Lord Francis's manner assume a greater air of abandonment to whatever impression she had made: she was astonished to find that in perverse proportion to his evidently increasing admiration, her inclination seemed to shrink from it; perhaps it was the malignant look of Mrs. Shafto, who was hovering near that end of the tent. Whatever it was, she believed propriety required her to get away from this *tête-à-tête*, and prefacing her request with a graceful apology, she requested Lord Francis would do her the favour of finding Mr. Mulcaster; and telling him, she saw they were going to dance a reel, so she would sit down till the country dances began.

As she turned from him directly to seek Sir Everard Fitz Arthur, at the upper end of the tent, His Lordship could only bow and obey.

"What is that move for?" asked the dandy of the phaeton, of Miss Augusta Shafto, to whom Sir Thomas Sykes had presented him during the breakfast. "Don't you see!" responded Miss Augusta, "Delaval Fitz Arthur has done dancing. He is surer game, than a bird of passage, like that conceited, disagreeable Lord Francis."

These remarks were intended, by one of the speakers at least, to be heard by their subject; and they were heard: Honoria's eye-flash showed it. She looked so nobly handsome at the moment, that perhaps the invidious Miss Augusta wished she had not brought such proud beauty to her cheek. But Mr. Spratt, the charioteer of the most dashing equipage on the course that morning, was gaping for more food for his envious contempt of the Lord Francis Fitz James; and Miss Augusta hastened to pour in exclamations against the bad taste of His Lordship's dress, the horrid colour of his coat, the miserable mediocrity of his neckcloth; to the complete rapture of a youngling commoner, in a coat of grass-green, and a cravat of stifling circumference.

Honoria meanwhile was hastily asking herself, where all her agitation on the score of Lord Francis was gone? Something had failed, she could not tell what; or else all highly raised expectations, and eagerly pursued objects, were to have the fate of the Abyssinian traveller's, when he reached the source of the Nile,—disappointment! disenchantment!—a feeling that all is vanity! To the chiseled beauty of His Lordship's features, *to the poetry of his countenance*, to the interest excited by his voice, manner, and conversation, she did exact justice; but enthusiasm was not mixed with it. In short, the spark had not fallen upon the altar of her heart, that was evident: in spite of prepossession and anticipations, Lord Francis was not the fated person. Thus quickly, perhaps rashly, certainly

foolishly, did Honoria decide in five minutes, after a dialogue of fifteen.

She now saw Fitz Arthur disengaging himself from persons seeking to detain him; for with a bounding heart, he had noted her breaking from Lord Francis Fitz James. When, on reaching her side, he found her all crimson agitation, and heard that she wished to get near his father, till her partner should claim her, his late despondency melted into air, and his pulses throbbed anew with lively hope.

X Trembling and silent he took her hand to lead her across the tent—but the reel dancers were an impassable barrier; they were obliged to wait for an opportunity of getting through their mazy line. As Fitz Arthur naturally retained the hand he had taken, Honoria felt the trembling of his,—at another time she might have asked what agitated him, but she was not in a mood to trust herself with speech,—a single word of any emotion, she felt would make her burst into tears. Miss Augusta's cruel insinuation had pierced her very heart; and she durst not relieve that heart now, by revealing it to the only person who had wound himself completely into her confidence!

Honoria knew not exactly what she was feeling, nor why she was feeling keenly. She felt that Fitz Arthur really loved her; she saw that Lord Francis admired her, was interested in her: she knew what her friends at St. Cuthberts wished and expected for her, from this distinguished Lord Francis: she remembered all that her enemies had ever said of her designs upon Fitz Arthur. She never then could accept the hand of Fitz Arthur; and perhaps she never would choose to take that of his loftier rival.—Honoria's heart was full to bursting; and a sense of deep affliction struggled for victory, with the infirmity of her character—pride, criminal pride.

Fitz Arthur meanwhile was fluctuating between dread and delight, conscious to something unusual in Honoria's avoidance of his eyes, as he addressed her; to a quicker heaving of her bosom, as she kept looking down

and listening to him. Could it be? he thought: had his forced attendance upon other women that day, pained her? Was it indeed, as Hylton and his father assured him, that she had shrunk hitherto from his obvious affection only from the most flattering reasons?

Impatient of suspense, he hastily inquired how she liked Lord Francis Fitz James, her champion, the bard she honoured with such partial admiration!

"I do think I ought to say he is every thing I expected. Yet, though he certainly is most eloquent, most interesting, most unlike all other people, and most particularly handsome,—I am—and I cannot say why, —disappointed!"

"Disappointed!" repeated Fitz Arthur, his face almost emitting rays.

"Yes, indeed!—though perhaps not in the character and manner themselves, but in the impression I expected they would make upon me. See what a foolish creature I am acknowledging myself!"

Honorina was never reserved to Fitz Arthur; if she began a conversation with resolutions of self guard, she ended by forgetting them. At that moment Fitz Arthur's heart almost suspended its pulsation from excess of happy emotion. They were just then crossing the tent.—"You are staying at St. Cuthberts," he said, hurryingly. "If I call there, to-morrow, directly after breakfast, may I ask for you?—I have something to say—to sue for—if I have the courage after all!"

"Any thing I can do!" interrupted Honorina, as they made their way towards Sir Everard. "What is it? Tell me now, that I may oblige you instantly."

"Not now,—not here!" repeated Fitz Arthur, his voice scarcely audible from tumultuous feelings,—"*to-morrow,—at St. Cuthberts, dear Miss O'Hara!*" and unconscious of what he was about, he once more pressed the hand he was yet holding, and abruptly relinquishing it, left Honorina within a few paces of his father and his youngest brother.

As Honorina, all agitated and alarmed, and afraid of herself, took the seat the Baronet eagerly offered, by

his side, he bade Thomas follow his brother, who was to take him home ; bidding the urchin remember, that all his indulgences that day had been granted to Delaval's request ; and that, consequently, he must take care and be a good boy. Thomas looked exceedingly inclined to be a bad one :—but summoning up an expression of face something between sullenness and obedience, the ill-conditioned young gentleman went off as he was directed.

Honorina, instead of listening to this short monologue, was fortifying herself against the tender disturbance Fitz Arthur's looks and words had given to her foregone resolutions, and to what she believed her foregone sentiments concerning him. She was bringing all the insulting speeches and acts of the Shafto family in formidable array to oppose this transitory weakness ; and trying to dwell with livelier feelings of gratification and anticipation upon the person, talents, rank, admiration, and *éclat* of Lord Francis Fitz James.

Sir Everard kept eying her as she was involuntarily following with her eyes the object then possessing her thoughts ; this was his son. He felt strongly moved to broach the momentous business. He thought, that if he were to seize the present moment for expressing his son's wishes, it would afford scope for many confidential details, which must exalt Delaval in her esteem, and which Delaval would never relate of himself.—Why should he *not* do so ?—It would be such joy for himself to witness the joy, the surprise, the gratefulness of the amiable orphan ! It would make him so happy, to go home instantly and tell his son he might return and claim the hand his father had asked and obtained for him !—A doubt of Honorina's rapturous acceptance of the proposal he meditated, the artless Baronet did not entertain. He suddenly inquired if she would give up dancing for a quarter of an hour, as he had something to say which he should not like to have interrupted.

Honorina, never dreaming of an avowal from Sir Everard's lips, as his son's proxy, expressed her ready

pleasure in giving him as much of her time and attention, as he gratified her by wishing for. "Well, then," the Baronet said, "let us move a little farther that way :— this snug corner of flag-staffs and laurel boughs, will keep us out of sight."

Poor Sir Everard recked not, that what sheltered one party, might soon afterwards conceal another ; he did not observe Mrs. Shafto loitering near : complacently viewing what she hoped her Augusta's incipient conquest, in the shape of young Mr. Spratt, jerking his porringer pate with the sudden notion of being a man, and a most admired man.

Honoraria was so often made Sir Everard's confidant on the subject of his two younger boys, and his own benevolent embarrassments, that she prepared herself to listen with subsiding emotion : but her eye was momentarily arrested by the sight of Lord Francis Fitz James, at some distance. He was now leaning up against the side of the tent, neither looking for her, nor at the dancing ; evidently yielding to meditations foreign to the scene ; and only noticing, with an air of disdainfulness and arrogance, (as they challenged his attention,) the few very fine ladies whom she had just before heard buzzing, "O, there's Lord Francis!" She could not marvel at his disregard of their flattering attempts to begin a flirtation ; but she thought less obvious contempt would have been more amiable.

Sir Everard quickly drew off their attention. He began as if about to rehearse a task ; and indeed he had revolved such an imagined scene as the present, till he was quite prepared to go through it ably. He first made a short exposition of his tangled affairs previous to his son's return from India ; then related all that son had done to retrieve him, and prevent future embarrassments ; told the tale of Stephen ; explained Fitz Arthur's self-denying motives for quitting a profession he liked ; and, lastly, enlarged upon his own desire of rewarding such a son, by bestowing on him a wife wholly devoted to his welfare and happiness. He then said how he had contrived to disencumber one estate,

that settlements might be made upon such a woman ; finishing, by assuring his astonished hearer, (with more warmth of heart, perhaps, than refinement of delicacy,) that although half the county might call him an old fool for his pains, he was ready to give up some tempting prospects for his son in the way of marriage, and open his arms to Miss O'Hara as the object of Delaval's sincere affection!

Whilst the simple-minded Baronet was thus eloquent, exulting in the rapidly changing colours of Honoria's cheek, as she sat panting and bewildered, unable to see clearly how she ought to act, little did he guess what in a single instant fixed that wavering colour, and sealed that heart again ; what at once blotted from her sight all his son's merits and sacrifices, even his own excess of generosity ; it was a glimpse of Mrs. Shafto, slipping behind the laurels to listen to their discourse. With fatal precipitation our heroine turned round, and in a few words, but those decisive almost to haughtiness, acknowledged her poverty, and declined the honour of his son's addresses. Not allowing herself time for a second entreaty, she then rose hastily, and would have said something of kind and grateful import, by way of message to his son ; but an unaccountable choking sensation prevented even the attempt, and abruptly breaking away, she lost herself among the dancers.

Sir Everard, absolutely stiffened into stone, by astonishment and displeasure, remained like a figure cut on a tomb. The moment Honoria ceased to be visible, the odious cause of this infatuated act glided out from behind her laurel screen, and taking a seat beside Sir Everard, ere he was yet awakened from his stupor, began her usual strain of expressed interest in him and his ; flattering him on his vulnerable point—his children ; and extending admiration even to the rebellious Thomas.

After having duly expatiated upon the young gentleman's growth and good dancing, and prophesied, therefore, that he would turn out a great naval character,

a second Lord Howe, she proceeded to comment upon the young ladies present: it was then easy to get at the subject of Miss O'Hara.

Of Miss O'Hara she talked long and ably; determining to give the death-blow to her power at Arthur's Court, she lamented the imprudence with which that poor vain girl was destroying her own prospects. "After all the pains she, Mrs. Shafto, had taken to induce young Chaplin to think of her seriously, and after the girl had given him encouragement too, as she understood from Mrs. Meredith, it was evident that she was actually conceited enough to fancy it possible for her to aim at the hand of Lord Francis Fitz James, the Marquess of Killarney's son! Mrs. Shafto had heard from Lady Haverford a very embarrassing story about her, and that strange character; a something of their meeting before breakfast on the hills, when quiet people were in their beds; when some romping scene took place. She could not say exactly why or how, but my Lord Francis had obtained possession of the young lady's shoe; a most improper circumstance! and since then Mrs. Shafto had observed her trying to allure him into attentions which were highly indecorous in a young person of her condition to wish to attract. In short, Mrs. Shafto was pained to say, she began to think this Miss O'Hara, not only a dangerous, but a very light-minded young woman; and she could only hope for worthy Mr. Meredith's sake, that she might not fall into some unpleasant predicament, while endeavouring to draw the sons of ancient families and noblemen into a *mesalliance*. She was shocked to discover so much art and design and boldness in any young creature so very pretty and plausible. She really ought to beg her kinsman's pardon for venting all this upon him, but she was so displeased and disappointed!"

Sir Everard writhed with torture during this elaborate exposition. He had warmly regarded Honoria for her own sake; and the moment he became aware that his son's happiness depended upon her, and believed he could obtain such happiness for him, he

had loved her with greater fondness. Her unexpected and short refusal had at once unseated partial feeling; and now that Mrs. Shafto's falsely coloured information made him believe his son rejected for the *ignis fatuus* of a title, his indignation knew no bounds.

To doubt Mrs. Shafto was impossible; for he had disbelieved her former assurance that Miss O'Hara disdained and ridiculed Delaval; and Miss O'Hara had herself in a manner confirmed the truth of this assertion.

He now started from his seat, exclaiming with an oath, a transgression of rare occurrence with him, that he believed Miss O'Hara deserved all the ill she said of her, and that he should henceforth act accordingly.

With this satisfactory declaration, not troubling himself with the fear of what Mrs. Shafto might gather from it, he abruptly turned from her, and left the place.

For many minutes Honoria stood on the spot to which she had hurried, without consciousness of what was going on before her, or hearing the different men who asked her to join the reel. A death-like sensation had succeeded on her cheeks, and in her heart, to their late glow of proud triumph: she felt as if she had just swallowed a dose of poison; and knew not to what agonies of grief and contrition she were next to awaken.

What did this sensation mean? Was it not regret for having given such pain to two persons equally loved and honoured by her? was it not shame for having felt exultation in refusing Delaval Fitz Arthur within the hearing of his insolent relation? It could be nothing else. It was so grievous to afflict the good, the generous! so humiliating to feel conscious of a pitiful crime! this tacit connivance at Mrs. Shafto's eavesdropping, was a pitiful crime, perhaps as criminal as the mean act itself. She had seen Mrs. Shafto slip behind the banners, and she had not resisted the temptation of letting her remain there to hear her refusal of the heir of Arthur's Court! A word, a glance from her, would have checked Sir Everard.

Honorina was so utterly lost in these thoughts that she did not hear Mr. Mulcaster repeatedly asking whether she did or did not choose to dance.

Lady Haverford's voice awakened her.

"You dear creature!" exclaimed the pretty Viscountess, "I have not been able to say ten words to you all this day—you see how I am torn to pieces by every body! But to-morrow—you dine at Monksden, they tell me—then we *shall* meet—we *will* talk—I *will* have you all to myself for one hour by the clock. I have told Lady Henderson so; and she has just invited Lord Francis, and he has consented—what a miracle!" (Lifting and pressing Honorina's hands in hers, with every energetic breath.) "I have worlds to say. My dear, what a delightful county!—such charming people all of them! That handsome Captain Fitz Arthur with those large garter-blue eyes—did you ever see such eyes?—that dear old Sir Everard!—and those beauteous Mulcaster girls!—no—you are all, much too charming!—There! don't you see those poor Ladies Lumley, looking so beseechingly—they want me to help them in something. I must go to them and their officers. To-morrow—remember to-morrow." And away flew this real victim of popularity, to smile, and exclaim, and protest, and promise to other admirers of both sexes.

Honorina heedless even of her, in her present state of feeling, looked back to the seat where she had left Sir Everard; it was vacant; he was no where to be seen. His son had been long gone; and what Sir Everard had to tell, would prevent Delaval from returning. Honorina now tried to rally back her spirits or her pride; in short, to stifle conscience, and right feeling; and giving her hand to Mr. Mulcaster, she inquired what they were going to do.

"Why go down a country dance;" was the reply. "The reels are done with. Where are your wits, fair lady?—You look as if you had just come from hearing Mr. Tudor's lecture upon chemistry, in the corner yonder, over Mr. Spratt's brilliant shirt-pin. If you

had seen how the puppy stared when he was solemnly assured that all diamonds were only crystallized charcoal! That Tudor! if he keeps loading his noble pupils like two packhorses, he'll be clever if he ever gets their faculties on their legs, and makes the said faculties *use* those legs. Why don't you laugh, Miss O'Hara? or say, 'That is not a bad observation of yours, Mr. Mulcaster.' "

Honorina confessed she had not been attending to him sufficiently.

"Why, what has good Sir Everard been saying to you," he resumed kindly, "to make you look so dismal? no trash, I hope, of that grim white woman's; (an appellation he often gave to Mrs. Shafto;) but we'll have our triumph there, yet. I am no seer, if before three months are flown, you have it not in your option to be Lady Francis Fitz James. That title would be a cannon ball to her!"

"Pray, pray, Mr. Mulcaster!" cried Honorina, almost with tearful earnestness, shrinking now from the bare idea of such a distinction.

"Well! you'll see:" persisted William, mistaking the cause of her obvious agitation. "The veriest idiot can find out when a man is positively struck. Lord Francis pretended that he did not remember your person in the least at Arthur's Court, though he recollected sparring for you with Mr. Frazer: that was stuff—that was indorsing the bill of indifference too much. Then he would have it, I was in love with you; betokening that he thought no man could know you without being in such desperate plight. Now you must know that I have not the honour to be the least in love with you, (thank my stars!) and never had; though I like you passing much,—yet, not quite as much as darling Jane."

"Now do cease, Mr. Mulcaster."

William would not cease. He had not acquired his *pet-name* of Prince William for nothing: and as those who gave it him in his own home, almost delighted in being swayed by a brother as affectionate as he was

whimsical, he frequently exercised, or usurped the same authority over persons to whom he was nothing. He now continued running on about Lord Francis, introducing every circumstance likely to prepossess his hearer in her champion's favour. Aware of Honoria's sympathy with the sorrows of genuine affection, he dwelt principally upon Lord Francis's deep affliction for the death of his sister, finishing the description with, "I don't tell you Fitz James went about, like that fool the Duke of Anjou, with Death's heads on his buttons, when he lost his mistress in some King of France's time, that I can't take time to remember;—but he never has been quite himself since; always with a touch of the miserable on his visage, as yours had five minutes ago.

Warned by this remark upon herself, Honoria cleared her countenance as well as she could, and tried to meet the couple dancing down, with some attempt at her usual life.

Whether it be indeed true, that what we feign, we feel at last, or whether a perpetual recurrence to the expected visit of Fitz Arthur on the following day, tended to tranquillize her; whatever it was, Honoria certainly found her extreme emotion subside, and saw the black cloud disperse, which had so lately covered all her feelings and expectations. What those expectations were, we must not too closely examine, since she refrained from doing so herself. Sufficient, that as they strengthened unconsciously under the influence of certain recollections connected with many a look and many a conversation of days gone by, the light of her countenance gradually rekindled, and she was able to finish her dancing with easy grace, and reply to the questions of surrounding friends and admirers.

Among the latter, it appeared as if Lord Francis Fitz James were actually inclined to enlist himself: for when the set was broken up, and William led her to a seat near his sister's, His Lordship left a short, milkmaid-looking young woman, with big bold eyes, who had been relentlessly talking to him, and turning

his melancholy regard upon Honoria, commenced conversation.

One of Lady Hexham's party struck his disabled arm lightly with her fan, in passing. Lord Francis looked up. "Who was your little vulgar friend?" carelessly asked the questioner.

Lord Francis replied with equal carelessness, "Only a cousin of mine :—I mean the wife of a cousin."

"O, I remember—the great Staffordshire fortune ! My dear Lord Francis, didn't you die of that ball-gown at four o'clock in the day?"

"No faith ! I rather thought it pretty."

The young lady shrugged her shoulders and curtsied away, leaving Honoria impressed with two notions. First, that what she had always suspected, was true, that nothing is more vulgar than being over-dressed ; nothing more freely indulged in, by the *best-bred* persons, than ridicule, even to what the lower world would deem an indecorum ; and that Lord Francis had unamiable pleasure in mortifying those who might be silly, yet not malignant. The tone in which he had pronounced his oracular judgment upon a gown, which, it was evident, he had never looked at, denoted this too plainly. Involuntarily, Honoria thought of Delaval Fitz Arthur's indulgent nature, so averse to inflict even deserved chastisement.

Lord Francis engaged in general conversation with the small circle round him, and for some time he did so, without reviving interest in her mind towards him. Compunctious feelings had quite deadened her enjoyment in matters of mere taste. But when a question of Major Stanhope's, concerning that part of Ireland upon which the French under General Hoche had just made their alarming attempt,—when this elicited Lord Francis's generous sympathy with their misguided country, her interests rekindled ; and again she looked at, and listened to him, with eyes that matched the varied and fine expressions of his eloquence.

In vain Miss Shafto, disdaining men in a marching regiment, drew back from the possible attentions of

Colonel Mason's subalterns, and condescended to order about, the obsequious Mr. Tudor, with supercilious indolence : Honoria observed not, that her scorned admirer was thus parading the chains imposed by pride and pretension ! In vain did Mrs. Shafto audibly repeat what "that very fine young man with her daughter Augusta, had just been saying with such elegant point, of a certain pretty-looking girl present,—that she was cutting her own throat while hoping to wound every man's heart !"

Honoria had no longer an ear for any thing injurious to herself. She was all absorbed by sympathy, with many a wo in her beloved country, affectinglly dwelt on by Lord Francis.

In every thing he uttered, every worthy heart might sympathize ; for Lord Francis did not advocate rebellion and outrage ; he spoke but in the spirit of that Christian doctrine, which exhorts *parents not to provoke their children to wrath, lest they be discouraged* : he sought palliation of outrages, by painting provocations ; and delineated passions, which he endeavoured to prove, might by skilful management in those intrusted with the government of Ireland, be turned to the purposes of noblest action.

The candid-minded Stanhope was one of his readiest converts ; and as one heart-wringing story gave a daughter of Erin an excuse for tears, Honoria internally thanked him : for tears had long been in her heart (though from a different source ;) and now, when they rose into her eyes unseen and unnoticed, she found they relieved her deep oppression, and softly stole them from her cheeks with the edge of her fan.

William Mulcaster, much as he too was interested in the oratory of his friend, having heard all Mrs. Shafto's bitternesses, took care to let her hear in return, by a few apt words of allusion to the volume of *Feelings and Fancies*, who was really their author. He now abruptly asked Lord Francis if he would be presented to the ladies of Shafto Place.—"Not for the world !" was the abhorrent exclamation, and in no under tone.

Lord Francis had no ruth for persons he despised : he had not William's excuse for thus wounding Mrs. Shafto's self-love, since he knew her only as a disagreeable pretender to fashion ; her malignity was quite unknown to him.

As he started back from this hated introduction, and Mrs. Shafto's visage quivered in every pale feature with double-dyed mortification and surprise, Lady Henderson advanced, and politely reminded Miss O'Hara, that she was included in a dinner invitation to the St. Cuthberts family for the ensuing day : adding, that in addition to their friends of Arthur's Court, she would have the two Misses Clavering, whom she expected to find arrived when she got back from that morning's amusement.

Agitated and confused by the mention of Fitz Arthur, in her present state of mind, Honoria stammered out some words of obliged acceptance ;—instantly comforting herself by the certainty, that if Fitz Arthur did not keep his engagement on the morrow,—if he should not come to supplicate for himself, and to convince her, that without her life would be a wilderness to him ;—if he feared, by so intruding himself, to be forever banished from her presence,—at any rate she should meet him at Monksden, and be able to testify her grateful, tender, unaltered friendship for him. She *would* find then some way by which to convince him of her indifference to all other men, even to Lord Francis Fitz James.

She turned with the purpose of avoiding this formidable idol ; he had spared her the task. With one of those capricious changes, said to be frequent in him, Lord Francis had suddenly quitted the St. Cuthberts party, and retreated to another part of the tent, where he stood with his arms folded, and his head inclined ; every feature altered in its expression, and so regardless of what was passing round him, that Honoria almost decided upon its being an affectation of abstraction. Nothing could justify such instant and evident loss of consciousness to things without, except some extraordi-

nary rencontre or conversation ; and Lord Francis had not been so surprised.

It was clear Lord Francis was affected, and purposely fantastic ; for though others had not remarked so nicely, Honoria felt, that upon his second seeking of her, Lord Francis had worn a different manner from what distinguished him in their first introduction. His eyes sought her countenance with equal admiration, but not so exclusively as before ;—they were calmly admiring ; not eager, wishful, melting, and troubled, as they had been then !—Their full, soft light, did not embarrass her, as their repeated agitated glance had done at first. She felt, too, that Lord Francis did not wish her to fancy that he admired her more than others did ;—and strange to say, after all her girlish imaginations, and bewilderment of feeling, she found the conviction give her joy.

While pondering over this, a buzz around her drew off her attention.

“ O, no, its impossible ! ”—“ She cannot let him do it ! ”—“ So ridiculous ! ”—“ How very entertaining ! ”—passed from one fine lady to another. The next moment, Mr. Mulcaster, with disordered and hasty steps, came up to his sister :—“ I’m going, Jane ! ” he said, hurryingly. “ On my soul, I can’t stand it ! ”

“ Stand what ! dearest William ? ”

“ The sight of Lord Brinkbourn dancing,” he returned, more agitated as he spoke.—“ I HAVE some feeling for her left ! I cannot stand it ! ”

He was at the lower end of the tent, and through its door of drapery, ere Jane could question him farther.

“ Dear, generous William ! ” exclaimed his sister, turning for the sure sympathy of Stanhope’s look. “ What kindness under all his levity to-day !—sparing even her a real mortification ! ”

“ Yes, my Jane ! ” whispered her lover ; “ you may call him generous ; for, on my word, I believe he has just spared her the only mortification her vain heart is capable of ;—every thing else, to-day, has but grazed her skin.”

Honorina had not time to pause upon her own pleased conviction of Mr. Mulcaster's good feeling, for her hand was claimed by Colonel Mason ; and she was led to the dance, where Lord Brinkbourn was actually seen agonizing through a most complex figure, with Lady Haverford for his partner ; whose flickering smile, and occasional arch glance at Lady Catherine, seemed to claim even her enjoyment of the treat his misery afforded.

To Honorina, the sight of a man dancing in convulsions would have appeared just as agreeable ; for Lord Brinkbourn evidently felt the despair of having neither natural ear, nor educated feet. Whether he had been taught to dance, is a mystery ;—certain it is, he was always beginning a step as his partner was ending one and seeking her at the bottom of the set, when he should have been inseparable from her at the top of it.

"I shall have to hue and cry him, my dear," whispered Lady Haverford, as she flitted like a gay gauze-fly past Honorina, "miles," as she called it, from Lord Brinkbourn.

"O, how charming ! how very comical !" ejaculated one of Lady Hexham's young ladies. "Can you survive it, Lord Frederick ?"

"Only by the greatest of all possible exertions," was the composed answer, indolently lifting his eyeglass. "Do tell me, Lady Ann,—is he clambering up Lady Haverford ? Do you think she has a bird's nest on her head ?—Those sharp knees of his assaulting her pretty nose with a jerk at every yell of that horrid band !—O, he is much too good !"

"What a treat !"—"Poor Lady Catherine !"—"My dear, she's dying of laughing all this time !"—such were the amiable remarks circulating among the distinguished friends of the Hexham family.

Honorina felt their influence withering her desire of ever belonging to a set which Lady Haverford's graces, and native kindliness, had presented before her with such enchantment : evidently it was a set living solely for their own amusement, and seeking it in perpetual,

inordinate ridicule. Her good sense and good feeling told her how surely every generous sensibility and right principle must perish in such an atmosphere. No wonder Lord Francis disdained it. But she soon remembered that there was a much more numerous set among the high and noble of the land; she had only to recall the high-minded, and simple-mannered Lord Wearmouth, with his benign and graceful mother, to allow that she was commenting on a few outlaws of fashion, who, refusing to submit to the regulations of their wiser equals, chose to herd in their own little wilderness, and call their lawlessness sovereignty. So impressed was Honoria by this offensive spirit, that had she not known Lord Francis Fitz James was a guest at Ravenshaw, she would have suspected him of making one in a league to make her ridiculous, by affecting openly to admire her. "They are such masters of the art," she thought, "that who is to know when they are sincere."

Even her pleasant partner, with his long military queue, and rattling accoutrements, was evidently a matter of jest.

Colonel Mason, however, was blessedly unsuspecting of such a base return for the courteous attentions of himself and his officers. He strode smilingly down the dance, with as good a grace as a fencer; proud of his beautiful partner; and pleased, by seeing pleased faces around him.

Happily for all who were beginning to weary, Lady Hexham prevented a second exhibition of her future son-in-law, by asking for her carriage the moment he escaped from the dance; and Lady Henderson following her example, the Misses Mulcaster, who were nominally under that lady's care during the entertainment, were obliged to order theirs.

As our heroine was gallantly led along by Colonel Mason, she saw Lord Francis Fitz James, loitering, or forgetting himself, near the entrance; declining different invitations into carriages that would set him down at Ravenshaw. At sight of Lady Henderson and her

fair charges he recovered recollection, and advanced, asking if any of them would have the charity to take him away, as he had let Lord Wearmouth go home without him.

Monksden lying nearer Ravenshaw than St. Cuthberts, Lady Henderson was about to speak, but Major Stanhope, on Jane's hasty assurance that Sophia would now have the Dean's place in their coach, eagerly offered a seat in his tandem, and it was accepted.

Lady Henderson obviously suspected that Lord Francis would have preferred exchanging with Miss Sophia, for she smiled upon Honoria without speaking. His Lordship got into the light carriage, and away drove Stanhope, determined to obey an expressive glance from the eyes he always understood, which commanded him to say all manner of charming things to Lord Francis about Honor O'Hara.

END OF VOLUME I.







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